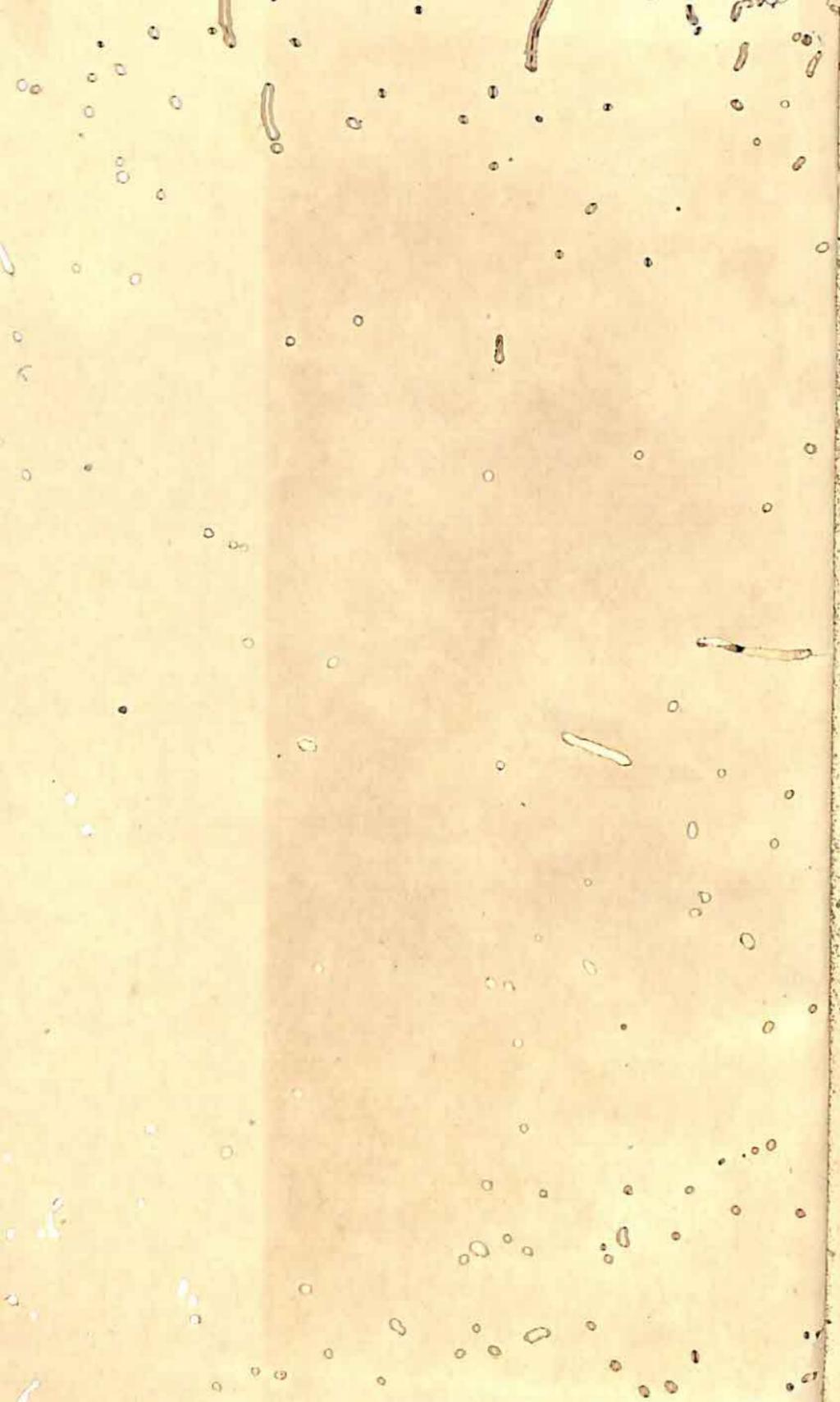


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H. C. DENT



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PREFACE

"To become a teacher," wrote Professor W. R. Niblett in *Essential Education*,¹ "is not the same thing as to take up teaching." I entirely agree. Only, I would put it the other way round: that to take up teaching is by no means the same thing as to become a teacher.

It is my conviction, based on fifteen years' experience as a teacher (or at any rate in teaching !) and somewhat exceptional opportunities over another fifteen years to meet teachers of all kinds and to observe their work, that far too many people are allowed to "take up teaching" and, what is worse, to remain in the teaching profession throughout their working life, who haven't the ghost of a chance of ever becoming *teachers* in even the palest sense of the word. Some of them wouldn't even try if they had. On the other hand, lots of people who would make admirable teachers—in the fullest and most modern sense of the word—are for various reasons, some valid, others not, deterred or prevented from entering the profession.

Consequently, one main purpose of this book is to discourage as many people of the first kind as I possibly can from "taking up teaching", and a second (as the intelligent reader will already have

¹ University of London Press, 1947.

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guessed) to encourage a great many people who otherwise might never have even thought of becoming teachers to consider it seriously—and to take the right decision!

I believe that, despite the clouds of uplift which emanate from public platforms (especially when politicians bestride them) about the dignity, nobility, high value, and so on and so forth of the teacher's work, in fact far too low an estimate is put upon it by society in general and politicians in particular. Consequently, far too low a standard is set for entry into the profession, the training of the teacher is pitched at too low a level, and the standard of efficiency demanded of him (or her) in his work is altogether too low—in many schools deplorably low, so low, indeed, that it can hardly be called a standard at all. And what there is of standard is the wrong standard.

"The main trouble with English education," said a distinguished statesman (who really knows his stuff) recently in my hearing, "is that it is so damned bad." I am forced to agree (with reservations, for many honourable exceptions to this generalisation must be made); but in my opinion the blame must be assigned not so much to the teacher as, first, to those who permit (even encourage) totally unsuitable persons to "take up teaching", and second, to those who break the heart of the good teacher by denying him the status, salary, working conditions, equipment, and the odd spot of genuine encouragement which are no more than his due.

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I am most anxious not to give the impression (it may be difficult for the reader at some places in this book to resist it) that I think all, or most, English teachers incompetent. I don't. They're not. This country of ours contains some of the finest teachers in the world, many of them; and they are the very salt of the earth. Save for a few quite exceptional parents, they are the most important people in England. So they should be. So all teachers should be. They have in their hands the making or marring of each rising generation. I say that in all seriousness, fully aware of the terrific impact upon the child of the cinema, the radio, the Press, his parents, relatives, and friends, and the daily life of the workaday world.

The general standard of the teaching profession should—in truth, must—be pushed up to that of the finest practitioners in it. (I do not mean the rare towering geniuses, the A. S. Neills and their like, for they dwell on lofty pinnacles of excellence inaccessible to ordinary mortals; but the normal first-rate teachers.) There is nothing inherently impracticable in this aim; on the contrary, to achieve it is no more difficult than was the creation of many a picked corps of specialists during the recent war.

Unless we do thus raise the standards of teaching, the great educational reforms made possible by the Education Act, 1944, will remain administrative reforms only—mere improvements in the organisation, the plant, and the equipment. It has been

said that no man can rise above the level of his wife. That isn't true, though admittedly the feat takes some doing! But it is absolutely true that no system of education can rise above the level of the teachers who serve it. We have in England created a magnificent new framework for the public system of education; we now have the much more difficult task of building up a body of teachers capable of creating within that framework (or within and without it if need be) a purpose and content of education worthy of the world's finest children—for that's what British children are, whatever anyone may say.

The opportunity is at hand. The country desperately needs—and is at last beginning to realise its need—first-rate education for all its children. Thanks to this realisation, more and better recruits to teaching are coming forward than ever before. The universities—with all their faults still the best universities in the world—are, as is most right and proper, at long last preparing to take up the responsibility for the training of the profession upon whose efforts they entirely depend. The schools are more concerned about their standards than ever before in our history. And there is a new and creative spirit abroad in education everywhere.

But, of course, there is much more to it than mere raising of standards. The social revolution through which we are painfully passing—the greatest and most all-embracing, all-changing revolution that the world has ever known—is affecting

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education to its very core and roots. The teacher's task is changing: fundamentally. It will be his proud privilege in the days to come—the immediately coming days—to create, prove, and establish new standards, or, as some would put it, to reinterpret the old standards in terms of the new world; in brief, to remake the whole conception of education.

Hence this book, at this time. It does not pretend to solve any of society's problems, or even any of the teacher's problems. It is slight, sketchy, and much more superficial than I should have liked. It is restricted to teaching in primary and secondary schools; I have deliberately left out of consideration the vast and important areas of technical, adult, and university education. But time presses; and there is so much to be done. I shall be satisfied if this book stimulates, if only by exasperating, other people to think more seriously and more deeply about the problems and remedies it suggests—and then to take appropriate action.

My thanks are due to Sir Richard Livingstone and the Oxford University Press, Mrs. Phoebe Gusden, Mr. M. L. Jacks, and Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., and Mr. James Bryant Conant and the Harvard University Press for permission to make quotations from books cited in the text; and to the Management of The Times Publishing Company, Ltd., for permission to quote from an article in *The Times Educational Supplement*.

Bovingdon, June 1947.

H. C. DENT.

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CHAPTER I

THE PERSONS

THERE are many reasons why young people take up teaching. Some think it's a soft job. So it is, if you decide to make it so. It offers short working hours, a five-day week, and, despite the recent Regulations some teachers are complaining so bitterly about, longer, more frequent, and freer holidays than most other adult workers dare even dream of. It need include no overtime. Whatever feats a few super-conscientious teachers may fancy it necessary to perform in the way of burning midnight oil over preparation of lessons and marking of exercise books, if a teacher is sufficiently slick and dishonest there is absolutely no necessity whatever for him to do a stroke of work from the moment the school closes in the afternoon until several moments after it opens next morning.

Many a teacher is both sufficiently slick and dishonest. He discovers that with a little forethought and organisation (and, of course, complete disregard of his pupils' interests) he can do all the marking he is compelled to do, and any preparation of lessons he feels inclined (which is usually little or none), within school hours—and still find time between nine and

four-thirty to solve the daily crossword puzzle, fill up his football pools, or write a text-book on "Self-Help in Arithmetic", or English, or whatever subject it is he doesn't teach. Of course, he's a bad teacher, or rather, he isn't a teacher at all; he's only a prison warder. And a pretty grim prison his classroom is, however modernly equipped it may be, or on however light a rein he may hold his class; for it is the deadly prison of a mental and spiritual vacuum. He does nothing, so his pupils do nothing—except deteriorate.

Next, many—far too many—young people take up teaching because they think it's a safe job. So it is; much too safe. There are only two offences for which a teacher can certainly be sacked: gross professional inefficiency and grave moral delinquency. (I omit the rare instances in which teachers are illegitimately hounded out of their jobs for holding political or religious opinions offensive to their employers.)

As in practice gross professional inefficiency is held to be nothing less than congenital incapacity to prevent a class from being a perpetually howling riot, and as children these days are quite remarkably docile (so different from what they used to be), and haven't the least desire either to howl or to riot perpetually, the chances of being fired for inefficiency are virtually nil. As for grave moral delinquency, well, just because teaching is so safe a job, and consequently attracts so large a proportion of the temperamentally timid and the naturally prudent,

and also because, as I shall note in a moment, teaching is in so many quarters considered so *genteel* a job, that seldom happens; and when it does, it usually takes place in so discreet a fashion that it is rarely found out. I shall never forget the almost incredulous astonishment of an education officer on learning that two teachers in the employ of his authority had been so unbelievably foolish as to misconduct themselves on their own school premises. Such un*wisdom* was beyond his ken.

The "safe" teacher is a dreadful menace to the children in his class. He is, in my opinion, a worse menace than the shirker or the wangler, because these latter are almost always pretty quickly rumbled by their pupils (however much they think they aren't), and are despised, ignored, or treated with contemptuous affection as the amiable crooks they are. But the "safe" teacher is taken all too seriously, and his dull pedestrian earnestness breeds a pervasive and pernicious belief in "safety first" which saps and debilitates all enterprise and initiative. The teacher being all for a quiet, insignificant life himself, his pupils insensibly come to regard the quiet, insignificant life, not too exacting, not too arduous, and nothing in excess, as the ideal life; than which no philosophy leads more surely to a death-in-life which is a complete negation of all that distinguishes the human from lower types of beings.

The third, and the largest, category of entrants into the teaching profession during the past forty years has been that of the children from working-

class homes whose parents have seen in teaching a heaven-sent way of escape for their brighter offspring from the hell of manual or operative employment, with its low wages, long hours, squalid living conditions, and constant dread of unemployment. For these boys and girls the way into teaching has been made fatally easy; there has been nothing to stop any child from taking up teaching who has had sufficient intelligence (or a good enough memory) to secure, first, a free or "special" place in a secondary school, and later a School Certificate.

When I was teaching in Yorkshire in the 1920's bright young things of ten or eleven used to walk into the school each September and announce confidently: "I'm going to be a teacher." And teachers they became. Was it to be wondered at? It was not. At that time, in the town where I was teaching, and in every town and village for many a mile around, one adult in every eleven of the total population was out of work, and a much larger proportion continuously in dread of being "stood off". Many of the boys in that school—and remember, as a secondary school it collected on the whole the children of the better-off, more thrifty, and more careful parents—came regularly to school having had no more than a single slice of bread and dripping for breakfast. Some had sometimes had no breakfast at all. Is it to be wondered at that father and mother, struggling to support a large and hungry family on the dole or a too light wage-packet, that was certain only in the weeks it actually arrived,

looked enviously at me and my like going to the school in good clothes, obviously well-fed, not working on Saturdays, enjoying long holidays (and holidays with pay, then an almost undreamed-of ideal for the labouring poor), without any fear of being fired, and (yes, they knew that, too) with the certainty of a pension at the end? Is it to be wondered at that they said to their John and Mary (as they did) : "Thee get'n be a teacher"? Or that they dinned the refrain into their children's heads until it became very substance of their being? Or that they drove them nightly to their homework and kept them straitly at it till it was "learned" beyond forgetting? (though oh! so rarely understood!). Or that they were up at the school foaming like furies were there but the slightest hint of slackness in either pupil or teacher? Or—saddest touch of all in a most melancholy tragedy—that they starved their other, less able children, as well as themselves, of food, clothes, entertainment, and education for the sake of the bright boy or girl of the family?

I would not for one moment be thought to suggest that the results of this economic drive out of manual and operative occupations into a learned profession have been wholly bad. Far from it. Many of the best teachers now in the schools are its products. At least two of the scholarship boys I taught in that Yorkshire school are to-day highly successful (and popular, which is probably more remarkable) headmasters of secondary schools. Parental pressure

and an inherited dread of the drabness and insecurity of industrial employment developed in the more physically and mentally tough among these youngsters a capacity to work hard, to persevere, and to keep the objective steadily in view which has stood them in very good stead as teachers. In a few there was nurtured a love of learning which led them on to become genuine scholars. In many there was born a fierce, and sustained, determination to fight for more and better educational opportunities for members of their class, so that succeeding generations should not have to tolerate the intolerable conditions in which they themselves had to grow up. The Education Act, 1944, is largely due to these great-hearted fighters, who throughout the bitter years between the two wars refused to be dismayed by repeated checks and rebuffs.

But all too many of these young people who came into teaching by this hard way were turned by their prolonged ordeal from intelligent and attractive children into dull, docile, and mechanical examination-passers in whom every spark of initiative, and imagination had been effectively extinguished, and whose mental and sometimes even physical energy had been reduced to the lowest ebb. The result was pitilessly—and despairingly—anatomised in an article contributed to *The Times Educational Supplement* on November 25, 1944, by a training-college tutor. After an exhilarating period in the early 1920's spent training the equivalent of the present-day "emergency" teachers, she wrote:—

. . . I went on to a two-year college. The principal, discussing the work with me on my appointment, remarked of the students, "They are all born in the same year and they come through the municipal secondary schools like a flock of sheep." She subsequently commented, in a moment of exasperation, "Really, these people ought not to have names but numbers." And in fact I found extraordinary difficulty in learning the students' names. So few did or said anything to draw one's attention to them. They no longer pursued me across the corridor after a class. Few now said, "But . . ." meaning "But my experience hitherto does not bear that out." No one asked how what I was saying to-day squared with what I had said yesterday. Sometimes, in thinking out a lecture, I asked myself this question. The temptation was to reply: "What does it matter? No one will notice if it does not."

And this, with the inevitable qualifications, remains my impression after working in three such colleges. Broadly speaking, the students are homogeneous and they are docile. So amenable are they as a whole, so anxious to oblige, so willing to look in any direction one indicates, and so devoid of any real impulse to look in that or any other direction, as to make one at times thankful for the personality of one's dog, who, whatever his faults, knows what he wants and means to get it. As for their qualifications; as time has gone on the number of students entering college with six



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or eight credits in school certificate, with matriculation, or the higher school certificate has tended in my experience to increase. But the number with a genuine passion for music, for ecclesiastical architecture, Japanese woodcuts or photography has correspondingly decreased. During the years in which it was my duty to interview candidates for admission I gradually ceased to question them about their general reading. I came to know that the books and plays mentioned would tell me only what had been prescribed for that particular year in the various school certificates and higher school examinations.

And—again, can it be wondered at?—these poor souls who, by passing one examination after another finally reached the backwater of lifelong security, could by that time see but one purpose in education: to aid other children to pass examinations, and so to achieve the same security.

That kind of teacher is a real tragedy; the next I would mention is a tragi-comedy. One of the paradoxes of education in this country is that while all really *nice* people (*i.e.*, social snobs) are more or less openly ashamed of it and blush at the very thought of being taken for a teacher, in many working-class homes teaching is regarded as a profession of the utmost prestige and gentility—yet one within their reach, like being a bank clerk or a Non-conformist minister, and unlike being a doctor, a solicitor, or a clergyman, occupations strictly reserved

for "toffs". So these parents push their children into teaching as a means of rising in the social scale—for their children's sake and also that they may bask in the reflected glory. The result is often sad but funny. These teachers are so careful about their pupils' manners, so down on rude behaviour, so shocked at anything *low*—and so completely unaware of all the really important aspects of education.

There is another, not altogether dissimilar category of teachers which may perhaps be best mentioned at this point: those who have failed to get into other—to them more desirable—professions, and who have taken up teaching as an unwelcome *pis aller*. Some went to the university with their eyes open: "Oh, well, if the worst comes to the worst I can always teach"; others never thought of teaching until they began despairingly to realise that they never would become lawyers, solicitors, journalists, authors, members of Parliament, Civil Servants or whatever it was their youthful idealism had yearned to be. Once more I would not say the results have been altogether bad for the teaching profession. Many a rejected Civil Servant has made a good administrative headmaster, many a would-be dramatist has salved his wounded feelings by staging admirable productions in the school hall. But many have become—just duds.

With this group I would couple another; of those who, having for whatever reason opted in the first instance to become teachers, failed to get into the type of school they wanted—that is, in almost every case the secondary school, the school of the highest

social standing—and have had to put up with what to them seemed very much a second-best, the public elementary school. Between the two wars this happened to relatively large numbers of teachers. In 1938 there were 11,800 trained graduates in elementary schools. Almost all of these had trained with the intention of serving in secondary schools. But in the 1930's only 40 per cent. of the students in the University Training Departments were being absorbed into the secondary school, which means that year after year some 900 men and women were taking up teaching in a more or less (generally more) disappointed and disgruntled frame of mind.

Many got over their disappointment quickly; they found a vocation in the elementary school, especially the senior elementary school, and have since done there work that is beyond praise. Some of the finest, most enthusiastic teachers I have ever met were young trained graduates in the pre-1944 central and senior elementary schools. They were doing really creative work; they were transforming their schools with their new ideas and new techniques and—what was far more important—giving their pupils a sense of liberation, of freedom, and of self-confidence they had hitherto never known nor thought possible. That the Modern Secondary school of to-day is, as the Ministry of Education has described it, "a growing tree with strong roots",¹ is largely due to such teachers as these.

¹ In *The New Secondary Education*, Educational Pamphlet No. 9, H.M. Stationery Office, 1947, p. 28.

But many of the would-be secondary teachers didn't take it at all like that. They felt that they were being forced into an inferior occupation—"Work that is beneath me", as I have heard more than one say—and being degraded to a lower social level than was their due; and they proceeded to demonstrate their superior qualities by being the slackest, least competent, least interested, and most subversive members of the staffs they joined.

Now I come to two other kinds of teachers, and to these it is most difficult to be entirely fair in short space and general terms. They are those who embrace teaching either because of a passionate fondness for children or because of a mystic devotion to something called Education with a capital E. From these two classes spring almost all the teachers of genius, the prophets, priests, kings, and queens of the profession; from them come also the cranks, oddities, sentimentalists, and charlatans.

While it is absolutely necessary to be fond of children in order to be a good teacher of children (it is impossible otherwise to stand their trying ways!), to be fond of children is not enough. Dogs are often very fond of children. So are many foolish mothers, who gush and rhapsodise (quite sincerely) over their offspring, and spoil them horribly, and so turn quite charming infants into nasty, ill-mannered little brats or intolerably conceited young pigs. So do some teachers. No, fondness is not enough. To it must be added understanding.

The devotees of Education are either divine or

diabolic. Some even manage to be both. They are never negative or neutral, and they never produce negative or neutral results; they are either a blessing or a bane to the children who come into their care. They are to be seen at their best, and at their worst, in privately conducted "progressive" or "freedom" schools. Some of these are veritable paradises for children, the most enlightened schools in the country; others are what might be described as laboratories for psychological vivisection, more or less crudely and cruelly performed according to the state of ignorance or perversion (or both) of the proprietor's mind. It is in such schools that the charlatans abound. Probably most of them did not begin as such; they began with a genuine belief in their own queer idea of education, but having found out that though it didn't work it did pay, they hadn't the honesty to give it up and become decent dustmen or domestic servants, but gradually built up an ever more imposing façade of pretence and deceit to conceal the fact that they were merely fraudulent impostors. The saddest part about it is that often quite intelligent parents are taken in by them—and their children suffer accordingly.

In the State schools the crank suffers short shrift—perhaps in some cases too short. Many a teacher with ideas has been compelled, at great loss to his pupils, to toe the conventional line early in his teaching career, and has been kept toeing it until he has no desire to do anything else. The way of the genuine reformer in the State schools has, during the

past quarter of a century, been made progressively smoother (the Hadow Report of 1926¹ may perhaps be said to have first given him official approval), but it is even to-day not always free from burrs and prickles, to say nothing of larger and harder obstacles. His is often still a somewhat uneasy and frustrated rôle. In part this is no doubt due to the defects of his virtues; educational reformers do tend to be most tiresomely dogmatic, overweeningly certain that they and they alone are right, scornful not only of pedestrian colleagues but also of fellow-reformers, and parochially minded, intent only on the little garden plot or greenhouse which they are cultivating, and unable to lift their eyes to the rich acres of fallow land immediately around. But it is not altogether nor mainly the classroom reformer's fault that he is so often a lonely and isolated soul. If he has a sympathetic and understanding head he is nevertheless quite likely to have unsympathetic and uncomprehending colleagues—and a single cynic can poison the minds of an entire staff. In any case, his ideas and methods are usually so different from those of his colleagues that co-operation is difficult, if not impossible, even when there is the best will in the world on both sides. It is happily true to say that there is a rapidly growing number of schools, notably infant schools and modern secondary schools, where the whole staff is united in pursuit of progressive ideals, and consequently works together as a

¹ *The Education of the Adolescent. A Report of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education.* H.M. Stationery Office, 1926.

harmonious team; but even to-day such schools are very much in a minority. (The nursery school should be excepted from this judgment; it is, and always has been, in a class by itself.)

This analysis of types of teachers and of the motives which brought them into teaching could be pursued to much further refinement of detail. There are, for example, the scholar who realises the priceless value of the long holidays for his private researches, and the athlete, who realises their value for quite other reasons. There is the exhibitionist who is irresistibly attracted, like a moth to a candle, by the thought of performing perpetually before a relatively uncritical audience. And so on and so forth. But lest I be thought to imagine that the teaching profession is wholly made up of misfits, let me conclude my crude analysis of it with a whole-hearted gesture of respect and admiration to the many thousands of men and women in it who, without any pretensions to outstanding ability or super-elevated character, took up teaching, *and have become teachers*, just simply because they felt they would find their life's vocation and fulfilment in teaching, and who have done so; who have accepted (not without complaint, but without effect on the quality of their service) the inadequate remuneration, the slight chance of promotion (which many do not even seek), the indifferent social status of the teacher, the frequently deplorable working conditions, and the constant spiritual frustration which are the teacher's lot in this as in almost every country.

No praise is too high for them, no gratitude too great.

The point I want to rub home by this, I hope somewhat depressing, survey is that the country has given far too little consideration to the question—vital to its health and prosperity—of what sort of people should be allowed to educate its children, and how they should be treated by society when they have been chosen for the job. It has received from its teachers far better service than it has deserved; nothing has amazed me more than the wonderful way in which quite ordinary and limited men and women, often temperamentally completely unsuited for the work, have stolidly devoted themselves to it and, on a much wider interpretation than could reasonably have been expected in view of their limitations, have made a success of it. Nevertheless, if a qualified observer were to go into a random selection of average primary and secondary schools to-day and assess carefully the personalities, educational and general interests, and pedagogical methods of the teachers, and attempt to estimate what the children are getting, both by way of benefit and harm, from their daily contact with those personalities and their subjection to those methods, I doubt if he would reckon more than one teacher in four as being the right person in the right place.

Don't reject this opinion of mine out of hand as an insufferable insult to a noble profession; don't, on the other hand, accept it uncritically. Check it against the opinions of others more qualified than I

to judge. Ask any H.M.I. His Majesty's Inspectors know the schools and the teacher's far more intimately than I do. If you want a second opinion, ask the principal of an Emergency Training College for Teachers. They are having to arrange teaching practice on a large scale for great numbers of students and, unlike the principals of permanent training colleges, are not able to pick and choose a small selected group of specially good schools. They will tell you of willing and friendly co-operation, but : "Have you plenty of first-rate schools in your area?" I asked one of them. "Plenty?" was the reply. "Not one; all fourth-rate." If you want still further evidence, witness the pathetic eagerness with which so many heads of schools are begging the students from the Emergency Colleges who practise in their schools to come on to their staffs as soon as they are qualified teachers. It's not only shortage of staff that prompts this eagerness; it's the drab mediocrity, the unoriginality and the sheer dullness of so many teachers in the public service of education in this country to-day.

Again, I don't want to be unfair. Even these classroom bores on occasion show they have latent in them greater qualities than ordinarily they know, or perhaps care, how to use. Thousands of them rose right above themselves when brought up against the privations, difficulties, and dangers of war conditions between 1939 and 1945. I saw them at work in every part of the country, in reception and evacuated areas, in century-old village schools and parish

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halls, in blitzed buildings and air-raid shelters, and I never ceased to marvel, nor ever shall, at the courage, initiative, enterprise, and cheerful resolution they displayed. There were black sheep among them—as in all other human flocks—but on the whole the teachers of Britain did a far finer job during the war than the country had any right to expect. Nothing did more to confirm and strengthen my faith in the superb moral quality of the British peoples. But Britain dare no longer rely upon the emergence of great qualities in times of crisis only; she must have those qualities on tap always, and most particularly in the professional educators of her young.

I said in my preface that unless we raise the standard of teaching in this country the great reforms made possible by the Education Act, 1944, will remain administrative reforms only. A better way of putting it would be to say that unless we improve substantially the quality of the teaching force, and above all see that only men and women fitted by temperament, character, intelligence, and attitude for teaching are allowed to become teachers, we may ~~lose~~, but we shall look in vain, for any reform in *education*, however much we may improve the organisation, plant, and amenities of the public system of education.

During the past three years or so, for the first time in our history, a systematic attempt has been made to select recruits for teaching, on a national scale, on the basis of their qualities as *persons*. The job has been well done. Every principal of an Emer-

gency Training College for Teachers, every member of the staff, and every qualified observer who has visited a number of these colleges will enthusiastically agree that, as persons, the men and women who have been, and are being, trained in them are on the whole first-rate. The Selection Boards set up to select candidates for the Emergency Training Scheme have done a thoroughly good job, with few errors. And the fact that they have rejected 60,000 out of 100,000 applicants is proof that their success has not been entirely due to a uniformly high quality in the candidates.

This process of rigorous selection, with particular reference to personal qualities, carried out by qualified and experienced panels of interviewers, should be made a permanent part of the machinery for choosing teachers. And it should be put on to a far more scientific basis. The success of the Selection Boards must not blind us to the fact that they have had an easier task than they would have had in more normal circumstances. They have in the main been able to select not only from among people who definitely wanted to teach, but from would-be teachers so matured by years of intensive experience of concentrated living that they knew not only what they wanted, but why. Nor must it blind us, either, to the fact that the Boards came to their task knowing that most of the candidates would lack the paper qualifications normally required for entry into the teaching profession, and were therefore compelled to bring a more searching eye to bear upon personal

qualities than no doubt they would have done had it been a matter of both qualities and qualifications.

Both must, of course, be taken into account. But personal qualities must come first, for they are innate, and they are largely unchangeable. Professional qualifications can be acquired; sweetness of disposition cannot, save by superhuman effort and discipline.

What would you say are the qualities most to be desired in a teacher? No two people probably would agree entirely; partly because the total of qualities is variable according to one's concept of education, to the type of teaching one has particularly in mind, and especially according to the ages of the pupils. The teacher of infants, for example, simply must have some qualities which are not absolutely necessary in the Sixth-Form specialist. And vice versa. Adult education undoubtedly requires different qualities of temperament and mental outlook from those required in educating children. But all these differences, I submit, are peripheral, not nuclear. There is a solid core of qualities which should be required of every teacher, whether of infants or adults, of super-intelligent, normal, or sub-normal pupils. And I think that most of us, if we took the trouble to give sufficient thought to the matter (as we should), would agree fairly closely about that core. Anyhow, here is my list, to be shot at as you please.

First, I hold it essential that the teacher's personality, physical and mental, should be neither repellent nor neutral, but positively attractive. This does not

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necessarily exclude all people who are physically plain or ugly, for many such have great personal charm, which may be enhanced by plainness or even ugliness of feature or form. But it does exclude people whose appearance, manner, or attitude of mind frightens, chills, or overawes others. The choleric, easily-exitable, over- and under-emotional, selfish, and erratic types should certainly be kept out of the classroom, as should even more certainly the sarcastically, cynically, or satirically minded. I take it for granted that more dangerous types—the sadist, masochist, and other perverts—would automatically be excluded. And, above all, exclude the dull; I am tempted to say that children suffer more from bores than from brutes.

Second, the teacher should be one who can attune his mind and feelings to those of others. This is particularly important with very young children. It would, of course, be unreasonableness to require that the teacher should actually think or feel as a child, because except in cases of arrested development this is physically and psychologically impossible. (Incidentally, some few adults who have never grown up make excellent, if limited teachers.) But the teacher should be able to put himself in the place of the pupil, and to form habitually and readily a vivid mental picture of what he is thinking and how he is feeling, and why. This clearly excludes the full-fledged introvert as teacher.

It assumes a deep and ready capacity for sympathy. This is absolutely essential. The teacher

must be able, whenever necessary, (and it is perpetually necessary), and whatever the state, of his own feelings, to be exceedingly tender-hearted. In the nature of things the learner must make many mistakes. It is by mistakes that he largely learns, and not least because these so often distress and humiliate him. It is at such times that the teacher's genuine and unforced sympathy is invaluable—pedagogically as well as personally. The two aspects cannot, indeed, be divorced, for education is essentially a matter of human relationships.

There is, incidentally, no respect in which teachers fall down on their job more frequently than in their attitude towards the mistakes made by their pupils. They will persist in regarding them as crimes, whereas they should really regard them as prime opportunities for teaching. A pupil who never made a mistake would not require a teacher.

Nothing I have said about the teacher being tender-hearted should be taken to suggest that he should be "soft". On the contrary, nicely balancing with the capacity to be tender must go that to be stern. But the object of the sternness is not the same. The teacher must be able to forgive, and to love, the sinner and the wayward unto the Biblical seventy times seven; but he must hate the sin and the waywardness at all times and implacably. This implies two further attributes in the teacher which in my opinion must be regarded as absolutely obligatory: he must be utterly honest—intellectually, emotionally, morally, and spiritually, and

he must have thrashed out for himself by his own honest efforts a working philosophy of life. I agree wholeheartedly with Sir Richard Livingstone when, following his master Plato, he writes¹ that "the ultimate aim and essence of education is the training of character—to be achieved by the discipline of the body, the will, and the intelligence". Faith, wisdom, and right conduct—these are the objectives the teacher should aim at for his pupils. How can he, how dare he, teach others unless he has himself achieved them, through that discipline of body, will, and intelligence of which Sir Richard writes? And how can he achieve them without a set of values on which to base his self-discipline?

This is, I know, a hard saying. It is all too rarely realised how immensely difficult it is to be intellectually honest, and how even more difficult it is to be emotionally, morally, and spiritually honest. It is perhaps hardly ever realised that the capacity needs to be trained, and trained rigorously. I shall return to this point in Chapter III. Meanwhile, I reaffirm my contention that the teacher, to be a *teacher*, as distinguished from one who has merely "taken up teaching", must have reached an honestly thought-out decision—no matter what it costs in "blood, toil, tears, and sweat"—about the values by which he will try to live, and consequently a clear idea as to the purposes to which he will endeavour to devote his ability and his energy.

¹ *Some Tasks for Education*, Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 33.

I am not suggesting that, once formed, his conception of values and purposes should thereafter remain static and unchanged. Quite the reverse; I would regard a teacher who was so complacent about his ideals as being unfit for his job. The teacher's personality should be essentially dynamic, but just as it should always be consciously under control, so also it should be continually under review.

To say that a teacher's personality should be dynamic implies that it should be adventurous. I cannot stress this point too strongly. The pernicious idea, so prevalent among parents and, I am afraid, among teachers, that any child with a touch of the devil in him should be directed away from teaching and towards some more "exciting" occupation, is one that must be combated ferociously wherever it is met. There is no life more exciting than the teacher's—though none, unhappily, more often or more easily smeared with the film of dullness.

That a teacher should be above average in intelligence and mental vision I take for granted. He should keep his mind alive, open to new ideas, yet shrewd and critical; there is no occupation in which it is more easy to fall into a mental rut than teaching, and none in which the effects are more fatal. He should have a robust and fertile imagination; and should have also the qualities of persistence, patience, and resilience. He must be adaptable, quick to take advantage of a favourable situation, and, even more important, adroit at turning an unfavourable one to his, or rather to his pupils', advantage. He should

be a veritable expert at improvising; even in the best-equipped schools this is a daily necessity. I wonder, incidentally, when the training colleges and university training departments will learn the lesson, so admirably and effectively taught by the Services during the war (and being taught by some teachers' training colleges to-day), that the capacity to improvise is not entirely a gift from God granted to the few and denied to the many, but a capacity latent in almost all of us which can be developed immensely by systematic training?

I need hardly say that the teacher should be able to explain even complex and intricate matters in a simple and lucid fashion. However informal organised education may become, to instruct—that is, to explain—will always remain a prime function of the teacher. But I would stress, in all seriousness, that every teacher should be something of an actor and more than a little of a showman. I hasten to add that these (literally) attractive but somewhat dangerous attributes should be kept very strictly under control!

Every teacher should be a scholar; all the time. By this I do not mean that every teacher should be an academic scholar, nor that he should necessarily have taken or be capable of taking a university degree. There are some excellent teachers, and many more people who would make excellent teachers, who are intellectually incapable of taking a degree. There are even some who would not benefit from the university life, though I think not many.

But there are undoubtedly intelligent men and women who have no great aptitude for book-learning or for abstract ideas abstractly expressed. Yet in their particular fields they can be, and often are, profound scholars; they both know and understand (two very different matters) their subject and its place and function in society and life. It is in this sense that I insist that every teacher should be a scholar; that his knowledge and skill in his chosen field—let it be motor-engineering, poultry-keeping, embroidery, the plastic arts, or what you will—should not only be up to what I may perhaps call university graduate standard, but that it should constantly be refreshed, increased, and enriched. May I emphasise that last word? By a scholar I understand not simply one who is continually absorbing fresh knowledge, but one who is also digesting it, is transforming knowledge into wisdom.

You cannot *teach* unless you are a scholar. I shall never forget how, many years ago, I was urgently summoned across the breadth of England by a head-master whose offer of a post I had refused by letter because I did not know anything about one of the subjects I should have been expected to teach. "It is quite easy," he said to me. "You just keep one lesson or so ahead of the class." I was young and gullible, and so I am ashamed to say I accepted the post. Perhaps it was as well for my own salvation that I did, for I learned—beyond all forgetting—that though by dint of hard work and a lot of bluff it is possible by keeping a few pages ahead of the class to

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grind out lessons that would satisfy a not too observant inspector, it is not possible to *teach* on so slender an equipment. All the richness of background that the scholar can, and every teacher should, bring to enrich and illuminate the facts he handles is of necessity lacking. The unscholarly teacher has at his command only the driest bones of information to rattle before his pupils.

Over and above any particular speciality he may cultivate there are two subjects in which every teacher ought to be learned—and I would say up to much more than "graduate level". I won't call the first psychology, lest the word conjure up a picture of an academic study to be mastered wholly in the library and the laboratory. I will call it rather knowledge, both theoretical and practical, of human nature.

The teacher's task is essentially to deal with persons, and it is therefore imperative that he understand persons. Nor is it sufficient for him to understand them at one stage only in their development, as infants, say, or adolescents, though in the course of his work he will naturally come to know one stage better than any other. But a teacher of infants is not going to be a fully competent teacher of infants if she understands infants only; she must also know what juniors and adolescents and adults are like. For all education is in some measure a preparation for the future, and if the infant teacher is ignorant of the capacities and interests of juniors and adolescents, how can she be certain that she is so educating

her infants that they may develop into good juniors and good adolescents, and ultimately good adults? The argument is equally valid if begun from the other end; the teacher of adolescents, or of adults, must know something of the nature of his pupils at the earlier stages—or how can he be certain he is dealing with normal adolescents or adults, or on what foundations he is attempting to build?

As I refrain from using the word psychology, so I do from the word sociology. I will call my second subject "man-in-society". Really, these two subjects are one, for human nature can be expressed only in society; but there are an individual aspect and a social aspect, and these can probably best be considered separately, at least in the present state of our knowledge and understanding of them. Yet without ever forgetting they are really one.

It has been a besetting sin of educationists to atomise the task of education. For long ages attention was wholly concentrated upon the subject of instruction, the Latin that was to be taught to John. Then the pendulum swung right across the half-circle, and attention was concentrated entirely upon the child. We even coined the phrase "child-centred education"—an admirable phrase so far as it went, but unfortunately it didn't go far enough. It is only quite recently that we have come to realise that a full and rounded education must centre upon the "child-in-society", the child in all his aspects, as individual personality, as social being, as worker, and as citizen; and that though each of these aspects

can in theory be studied separately, in practice they cannot be divorced. At one moment one is in the ascendant, at another, another; but all are present all the time.

It is because of this change in the conception of education—a growth rather than a change—that the teacher's task is changing fundamentally. All education, we now recognise, is directed towards the improvement of the whole personality for the whole process of living, whatever particular purpose may happen to be dominant in any particular part or aspect of education. That is why its ultimate objectives are faith, wisdom, and right conduct, and why character is the instrument it seeks primarily to fashion. And so, consequently, why it must be based on spiritual values tested and tried by the highest standards known to or conceived by man.

I am deliberately omitting the question of where a teacher will find the source of his values. To many the answer is, in religion, but many have rejected that answer. The decision must in each case be an individual and unforced, not imposed, one. I respect that freedom; all I will maintain here is that life on the human plane cannot be lived save by the standards of spiritual values. The saddest fact confronting humanity is that so large a proportion of the human race do not live human, but only sub-human, lives. A teacher's business is, in the last analysis, to guide his pupils towards spiritual values; to teach them how to recognise such values, how to assess them, to respect them, if need be to change

them, but above all to become committed to those in which they can believe. A teacher without values cannot possibly do this; how can the blind lead the blind? That is why I insist that every teacher must have a convinced philosophy of life, and rule the conduct of his life by it. He is not otherwise fit to be allowed to act as a guide to the art and purpose of living; and most certainly he should never be allowed to attempt to act as a guide to impressionable children.

To conclude this chapter with a matter of practical politics. I may well be asked: If you demand that the personal quality of every teacher be so high, are you sure that the nation can throw up a sufficient proportion of men and women of the calibre you desire to undertake the education of its children; and, assuming it can, is it justified in allocating what must in any case be a large proportion of its first-rate ability to the profession of teaching?

My answer to the first of these questions is unhesitating; Britain certainly has sufficient men and women of the requisite calibre to man, not only all its schools but also its universities and technical colleges and other educational establishments. We have grossly neglected our resources of ability, but the resources are still there. It does not need the recent investigation at Manchester University, which showed that for every one student in the university there were five people of equal or greater intelligence outside it, to convince me that we have abundance of ability. I have known it in the schools—where

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you see it least damaged—for nearly forty years. The fact that we let it go to waste thereafter does not mean that it does not exist. As for character—well, look at what happens when war brings out our people's best qualities. The fact that these are allowed to lie fallow between wars is our foolishness and our fault, not proof that the qualities are not there.

I must preface the answer to the second question by saying that so highly do I rate the teacher's function that in my opinion no nation with any due regard for its civilisation and culture would dream of giving national education anything but the first priority in the allocation of its mental and spiritual resources, even to the point of danger to other occupations if need be. None but the finest and fittest among its people ought to be allowed to engage in the supremely important task of educating the young, who constitute the national asset upon which the value of all other assets absolutely depends. The tradition of the teacher as a humble and depressed menial has probably done more to thwart and stunt the development of Western civilisation than any other single cause.

But having said that, I must agree that for England to set aside 300,000 (approximately the number that will be required when the Education Act, 1944, is in full operation) of its ablest men and women as teachers for the whole of their working lives would probably constitute a serious drain upon its resources of mind-power. But I do not think this need, or

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should, happen. Another tradition which I feel ought to be broken down as quickly as possible is that of "once a teacher always a teacher". I think this is a most dangerous fallacy. I would have a constant flow, at all ages, to and from teaching, for I believe that this would result in an almost miraculous fertilisation of both teaching and all the other occupations affected by the two-way traffic. I will develop this theme in Chapter IV. Meanwhile, I will attempt to justify my demand that only men and women of the highest intelligence and character should be permitted to educate the young by outlining my conception of what the teacher's task is going to be in the years to come. As I see it, it is going to be a very different, and far more difficult task than ever it has been in the past.

CHAPTER II

THE JOB

UNTIL quite recent times it was perfectly easy to define the teacher's task. It was to instruct; to give information, and to see that it was learned. Nor was there any doubt as to what should constitute the subject-matter of education. For close on 2,000 years, throughout Europe, it was the "seven liberal arts";¹ and in the schools the first of these, "grammar"—that is, the language and literature of ancient Rome—to which were added here and there those of ancient Greece.

Into the "grammar" school came normally only the most intelligent boys. Education was reserved to the intellectual élite, and the male élite at that. It was rarely considered necessary for girls, nor ~~for~~ as many perhaps as 90 per cent. of boys. There were exceptions to this general rule; Scotland, for example, from the fifteenth century onwards made persistent efforts (long, alas! unsuccessful) to establish a national system of education, available to all. But it was not until after the Renaissance and the Reformation that the idea began to spread generally—

¹ Grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.

and then but slowly—that the mass of the people ought to receive at least a modicum of education.

This idea penetrated late into England, and even then was regarded with suspicion. To give the “lower orders” so much as the barest elements of literacy was held by many to be the height of un-wisdom, only to be tolerated as a means to moral and religious regeneration. It was on this basis that the charity schools of the eighteenth century and the denominational schools of the early nineteenth century came into being.

Meanwhile, the English “grammar” schools, which almost died of inanition in the eighteenth century, began towards its end to stage a revival, headed by the aristocrats among them, the “public” schools. So there developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England two parallel systems of schooling which, as is the nature of parallels, never met. Nor did they resemble each other in any respect save one.

The purposes for which they existed were totally different. The subject-matter taught was completely different. The school buildings were very, very different. The teachers and the pupils came from different strata of society, and passed from school to different stations. Only the teaching methods were similar; but they were so similar as to be virtually identical.

The teacher’s business was to stuff as much knowledge—of certain specific kinds—into his pupils’ heads as he could bully them into learning. Whether

the knowledge was of any value to them, whether it was understood, whether, indeed, it *could* be understood by immature minds—these were questions few teachers paused to ponder. “Theirs not to reason why . . .” The teacher taught, the pupils learned—or did not learn—and regurgitated what they learned, and he who regurgitated most was the best pupil.

The only incentive to learning was fear—fear of the rod. Incredible as it may seem to-day, for twenty centuries, from the Balkans to Britain, knowledge was normally and regularly beaten into boys’ heads by way of their bottoms. Rarely did anyone question the method; still more rarely did anyone disapprove. Had not Solomon said “Spare the rod and spoil the child”?

In Britain this age-old theory and practice of education began to break down generally only during the latter part of the nineteenth century. It is not yet altogether dead; you can still go into British schools (not many, it is true) and hear a whole class parroting mechanically the teacher’s words. And you can still see the cane or tawse lying upon the teacher’s desk or hanging on the wall beside him. (Stranger still, any suggestion that corporal punishment in schools should be abolished is sure to raise a storm of pained and indignant protest; witness the correspondence columns of *The Times Educational Supplement* during May 1947.)

If one excepts the Nonconformist academies of the eighteenth century (which so inexplicably faded

out in the early nineteenth), the first signs of disintegration of the old, narrow, and brutal tradition of education began to appear in the "public" schools towards the end of the eighteenth century. Here, and there, at Shrewsbury, for example, the curriculum began to be slightly broadened, the savage discipline to be slightly more humane. Then came Arnold of Rugby (1828-42), to introduce an absolutely revolutionary change of purpose and atmosphere into the schools. Morality, not knowledge, was what mattered. His disciples carried the doctrine far and wide, though not into the schools for the common people.

Arnold made few changes in the curriculum, but at least he introduced modern history. Other "modern" subjects began to claim a place. Science made an unhappy *début*; it was either pounced upon gleefully as a most examinable subject (examinations were then becoming popular), or it was regarded as a soft option for the half-wits unable to stand the strain of the classical disciplines. Still, it got in, as did also mathematics, hitherto regarded as no gentleman's pursuit. And Thring of Uppingham (1853-88), by building the first school gymnasium and instituting regular school games, started a revolution almost, if not quite, as important as that launched by Arnold.

Meanwhile, in the denominational "elementary" schools there had begun a comparable movement, though perhaps naturally along more industrially useful lines. Woodwork, gardening, housewifery,

and other utilitarian but interesting chores found their way into the school curriculum. But this departure from the traditional was rudely halted by the infamous "Revised Code" of 1862, which in effect pinned the elementary school down to the "Three R's", and the "Three R's" alone, and effectively checked its progress for more than thirty years.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the two parallel systems of education, grammar and elementary, began to draw closer together, and in 1902 a most unequal marriage was arranged between them by the Balfour Education Act. Unhappily, the new national system of secondary education, which when it came into being had in it all the elements making for that abundant variety which should (and will) distinguish secondary education, was quickly tight clamped into the "grammar" mould by the first Permanent Secretary to the Board of Education, and was congealed by an externally imposed examination system, which, while it undoubtedly raised academic standards and gave teachers and pupils a definite objective, also rigidified the curriculum and put a veritable premium on the instructional technique of teaching.

As entry to the secondary school became more and more open to children from the elementary school, yet ever more fiercely competitive, the instructional technique became equally firmly riveted on the junior departments of the elementary school. What else could the teachers do? They had to deliver the

goods, and the goods that parents demanded were scholarships, to the secondary school. Only an occasional brave junior school here and there dared to try unorthodox methods. But the senior elementary school, unharassed by external examinations, began to throw up some notable experiments with subject-matter and methods.

As elementary and secondary school progressed in their uneasy partnership, there began to emerge three or four new types of teachers to meet pressing needs. As subject was piled upon subject in the secondary curriculum until, as Sir Richard Livingstone has said, this became a "bursting portmanteau", and as the pressure of the external examination grew ever more heavy, there arose the "subject" specialist to take the place of the general practitioner. With, sometimes, what pathetic results! An excellent scholar and admirable teacher of French, for example, would know no geography at all—having given it up in the fourth form to concentrate on modern languages. Neither the teacher of English nor the teacher of history would be expected to know even the rudiments of science; while the scientists, "the new barbarians", would be not only ignorant but supremely contemptuous of each and all of the humanities.

Subject specialisation never dug its claws so deeply into the elementary school, though of late years it was growing in senior schools and not unknown in junior. But in the latter a much worse specialism arose—that of the "scholarship class" crammer,

who made it his business to ensure that by hook or by crook the maximum possible number of children each year passed the "special place" examination for entry into the secondary school. (I once gave a class of special place winners, in September, the same examination that they had passed in March. They nearly all failed.)

Another, I think harmful, specialisation has become very general: that of restricting oneself to a narrow age-range. The teacher of infants, for example, can teach infants only; she would be helpless in front of a class of adolescents, or even juniors. I know teachers in secondary schools who would run ten miles rather than face a class of infants. Why? What nonsense this particularism makes of the beautiful (and true) theory that education, like peace, is indivisible.

And, unfortunately, teachers one and all, specialists or non-specialists, have with rare exceptions continued to regard the accumulation of knowledge as the overriding aim and instruction the main function of the teacher—however loudly they may protest the contrary, or however sincerely they may believe their ideals to be other than they are. "By their fruits ye shall know them." They have made both knowledge and instruction far, far more attractive. They have adopted "direct", practical, informal, and breezy methods. But in their heart of hearts they still worship before all else the great god Facts—despite all their talk about the training of character, the development of creativity and of

aesthetic appreciation, the education of the emotions, and the inculcation of spiritual values.

But the fact that they are talking—that we are all talking—about these matters shows at least that something of their supreme importance is at last being widely recognised; and though the movement is as yet confined to a minority, there is evidence that care for them is being incorporated into school practice in impressive fashion and to a rapidly growing extent.

To-day the traditional aims, organisation, curricula, and methods of education are being increasingly challenged. So much so that I believe we are on the threshold of the most complete change that has been made in education since the days of Plato. And the change is being rendered inevitable, and dominated, by our realisation that, as Sir Richard Livingstone has so finely written:—¹

The real modern problem is to humanise man, to show him the spiritual ideals without which neither happiness nor success are genuine or permanent, to produce beings who will know not merely how to split atoms but how to use their powers for good.

Which means, among other things, that within the next generation or so the teacher's task may well be so different from what it is now generally regarded to be that it will be wholly unrecognisable. How

¹ In *Some Tasks for Education*, Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 15.

unutterably foolish then will appear so many of to-day's wails about "extraneous duties"!

As I have tried briefly to indicate, this change has been slowly maturing for a century or more; but during the past ten or fifteen years it has suddenly acquired an enormously increased momentum. The recent war gave it a terrific impetus, and it may be that the passing of the Education Act, 1944, has finally opened the floodgates at full cock.

Four main trends may be discerned in this colossal change which is revolutionising the purpose, content, organisation, and methods of education. I will call them briefly health, activity, interest, and social concern. They may be epitomised in a sentence by saying that whereas formerly education was concerned with only a part of the child—his brain—now it is concerned with the whole child, body, mind, and spirit; and not only with the child as individual but the child in relation to the society in which he is born and brought up and of which he will shortly become a full and—it is hoped—a creative member.

I need not labour the increased emphasis on Bodily health; the universal attention to athletic sports and games, the work of the School Medical Service, and the spread of the School Milk and Meals' Services are patent evidence. Some teachers are still trying to evade their responsibilities in respect of the last; they will find it a labour of Sisyphus.

Nor need I tell the story of the growth of the "activity" movement in schools. It has had its funny (and tragic) moments, as when during the

1920's in particular some teachers came to imagine that children ought never to be quiet but always ceaselessly on the move—poor things!—or that they ought not to be taught or told anything, but find it all out themselves; or when the out-and-out advocates of "hand and eye" training in their enthusiasm forgot all about the brain. But the organisation of school-work round activity directed by the interests of children is still in the experimental stage, while the development of the idea of the school as a society, adapted to age, but functioning in all its parts, is as yet but rudimentary.

The institution in which the coming concept of education can be seen in most developed form is the English nursery school. Alone among our schools

The nursery school is first and foremost an educational institution which takes the whole child for its province. It is equally concerned with the physical, mental, and emotional phases of child development, and is specifically designed to provide conditions that will contribute to the natural and progressive growth of all the child's faculties, the development of robust physique, the formation of desirable habits, the stimulation of healthy mental and spiritual reactions to social environment.

Thus wrote¹ Mrs. Phoebe Cusden, a former secretary of the Nursery School Association of Great

¹ In *The English Nursery School*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1928, p. 51.

Britain, in 1938. That passage exactly expresses the ideal at which any kind of school should aim, and at which all progressive schools are aiming. In essence, it is the nursery-school ideals, the nursery-school objectives, the nursery-school organisation and methods which are transforming English education; and any teacher wishing to understand the coming nature of the teacher's task should make a deep study of this brilliant modern invention.

Like all ideas of genius, the fundamental idea upon which the nursery school was built was exceedingly simple. Not: What and how much can we *teach* these young children? but: What activities are natural to these children? and, How can those activities be so provided that they give physical, mental, and spiritual satisfaction and yet be formative of good character and right social behaviour? Margaret McMillan and her disciples set themselves to answer those questions, and magnificently they succeeded. The English nursery school remains—despite the encouraging progress other types of schools have made during recent years—incomparably the most genuinely educational institution in the country.

And there is no getting away from the fact that the pioneers of the nursery school have completely transformed the teacher's task. In fact, the name "teacher" has become quite inappropriate to anyone, whatever kind of school he may be in, who is working on nursery-school lines. M. L. Jacks has

written¹ a much better passage about this than I could hope to do : here it is :—

“ Teacher ” no longer rings true : it no longer describes the real character or work of those to whom we entrust the upbringing of our children : it smacks too much of instruction, of the *ex-cathedra* attitude, and of the dominie’s desk : it neglects too much those far more educative activities which go on outside the classroom, and those lessons learnt, perhaps unconsciously, from an environment, material, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, which it is the first duty of a school staff to create : it leads to too much teaching, and ignores the fact that probably the best teacher of to-day is the most self-effacing.

But what are we to do about it ? There is no other name. “ Educator ” would be far more accurate, but it is such an ugly word and, thanks to the horrid history of English schooling, likely to be both unpopular and to give a totally wrong impression. What is wanted is a new word combining the meanings of “ guide, philosopher, and friend ”.

The nursery school sums up and presents in integrated fashion all the best trends that have been developing in English education over the past century : activity on the part of the pupil ; work deriving from natural interest ; guidance on the part of the teacher rather than formal instruction ; equal

¹ In *Total Education*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1946, p. 145.

attention to the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs of the child, and to his social as well as his individual function. To make all this possible, the nursery-school teacher has created a controlled environment, exactly suited to the child's stage of development, in which his whole personality can mature, at its own proper rate yet without check or hindrance, in an atmosphere of freedom bounded only by the legitimate restraints necessary in a well-ordered society. What is wanted now is—and it is emerging—a comparable concept of the desirable environment and activities that will make equally good schools for older children.

What it amounts to in terms of the teacher's task is, roughly, as follows: First, the *raison d'être* of the school has utterly changed; it is no longer primarily a place for instruction in certain traditional fields of knowledge and skills, but a place where children may experience a rich and many-sided life, and, through experiencing this, may gradually form habits, develop attitudes, acquire knowledge, and learn skills which will enable them to live happily, purposefully, and creatively, both at the time and in the future.

Second, school buildings and the organisation of the school life are (necessarily) changing. With such a purpose as the above the school can clearly be no longer a place in which children are imprisoned for so many hours a day in cages called classrooms. It must be planned rather as a garden city, in which a society of free people have room to

move about their multifarious businesses in orderly yet unhampered fashion. I leave the architectural implications of this to the school architects, merely commenting in passing that some have already seen the light, as witness—for example, the “school parks” or “school estates” proposed in the development plans of the Brighton, Derby, and Isle of Wight education authorities. And I leave to the teacher the implications of being emancipated from the classroom.

Third, the content of education is changing. Its narrow limitation to book learning punctuated by occasional bouts of physical training and “practical work” is being replaced by a range of studies and activities wide as life itself, limited only by the ages and capacities of the learners. Moreover, the centre of gravity of the school curriculum is shifting. It was not some head-in-air idealist with his gaze fixed on Utopia, but a sober, official body, the Advisory Council on Education in Scotland (home of the academic tradition) which wrote, in an official report:—¹

It is still assumed in some quarters that those subjects confidently referred to as the “Three R’s” are the central core of education, and indeed all that is necessary for the great mass of children. The consideration we have given to this matter, and the evidence we have heard, lead us however *not merely to question but to deny the validity of this*

¹ *Primary Education*, Cmd. 6973, H.M. Stationery Office, 1947.

assumption under present-day conditions. (Italics mine.)

It was the same Council which wrote shortly afterwards,¹ in another official report; that secondary education could not be regenerated until the education authorities "regard nothing in the waking lives of adolescents as alien to their concern", and declared that Scottish secondary schools were "full of good teaching and poor learning" because the teaching was "wedded to methods designed for a bookish minority which lack appeal to many now in the schools".

Fourth, the rightness of organising knowledge in "subjects" for children to learn in school is being seriously questioned, at any rate for the great majority of children. The building of knowledge and skill round a "project" or centre of interest is taking the place of the "subject" pattern; and is being not only officially advocated by the English Ministry of Education, but defended² by them as capable of giving as good intellectual training as formal instruction in the traditional "subjects".

The evidence I have quoted (which could be supported by much more) is, I think, sufficient to show that my survey is far from being the result of wishful thinking on the part of a starry-eyed idealist. It is deduced strictly from what is now happening in the schools. And nothing will or can stop the movement. Most truly does Professor Niblett write in his general

¹ In *Secondary Education*, Cmd. 7005.

² In *The New Secondary Education*, p. 38.

preface to the series *Educational Issues of To-day*,¹ that "The organisation of education is changing as we watch, and during the next few years vast developments in educational practice are inevitable." Yes, *vast* developments—much vaster than most people, most teachers, yet imagine; and within "the next few years", not in some period so remote that it does not really concern us who are engaged in education now.

Admittedly, the revolution has not yet gone very far; the great majority of school children are still penned in "classrooms" and stuffed with "subjects". But any successful revolution advances by geometrical, not arithmetical, progression. If I am not much mistaken, the men and women now coming out of the Emergency Training Colleges are soon going to give this one another great push forward. They are bringing to education a totally different attitude from the traditional one, and they are bringing with it maturity, and a resolution that will impress deeply upon the schools the attitude and the methods they so firmly believe in.

The detailed pattern of school life which is emerging cannot yet be clearly discerned, but its broad outline is something as follows: Every school, for whatever age-range, will be organised and run as a democratic community, whose primary purposes are: the nurture of bodily and mental health; the giving of personal happiness and satisfaction arising out of abundant opportunity for self-

¹ University of London Press.

expression, limited only by the legitimate claims of the society upon the individual; and the acquirement of such knowledge and skills as are necessary to each individual that he may live a rich personal life and contribute to the limit of his capacity to the well-being of society.

The nursery and infant-school societies, which ought, in my opinion, to be one society covering the age-range two-three to seven, are geographically limited to the school building, playground, and garden. They are essentially domestic societies, larger and more homogeneous than a home, yet, like it, enclosed and sheltered. Within these, so to speak, walled cities, the teachers are the civic authorities, the children the ordinary citizens. An essential feature should be, and is in many schools, the active co-operation of the parents, especially the mothers, who may well be invited to play a regular part in the administration of the little State.

In these societies children learn by living it the life of a well-ordered home and at the same time the give and take of a larger society. Good personal habits and behaviour, the rudiments of civic virtues, and the basic skills required for employment, are all being acquired, while every opportunity is given for awaking and nurturing creative capacity. The teacher should therefore be learned in all that pertains to the home and skilled in all its occupations: she should also be able to reduce the complex life of modern society to its simplest terms, for all its elements are here, yet without complications. Above

THE JOB

all, she should be an acute observer, sensing a trait, a tendency, almost before it is overt, and capable of encouraging it into vigorous life or of gently but effectively suppressing it.

The dominant notes of the nursery and infant schools are activity, play, purpose, and co-operation. Hardly anything is taught; but at every moment valuable lessons are being learned. There are no "subjects"; the teacher's time and care are taken up with:—

- (1) Care for bodily and mental health.
- (2) Helping the children to master the art of communicating with each other, not only through the spoken word, but also through their play and acts of service.
- (3) Assisting them to acquire mastery of material things and concrete ideas.
- (4) Helping them to learn the environment the school provides and to move easily and unafraid in it.
- (5) Enabling them to learn the meaning of society.
- (6) Developing their appreciation of the true, the beautiful, and the good.
- (7) Giving them constant opportunity and encouragement to create, in the widest variety of media.

One further point I would make, and it is of the utmost importance. There is in the nursery school no divorce whatsoever between "cultural" and

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“vocational”. Almost everything the children do has vocational value, yet everything they do is essentially cultural. If only such wholeness could be preserved throughout all the stages of education, then education would be a much healthier process than it is.

In the junior school the geographical boundaries are enlarged to include the neighbourhood surrounding the school building. The mental boundary expands to take in first impressions of foreign lands and past ages. The two most valuable teaching techniques for this period of insatiable curiosity and indefatigable energy are, I am convinced, the local survey and the project. They are really the same technique, save that the one is concerned with a place, the other with a topic.

It is essential that the teacher of juniors should have a good working knowledge of primary products, major industries, systems of transport, and social services. He should make a point of learning intimately the district around the school, and of getting on friendly terms with its people, most of whom at one time or another are going to be helpful to him in his work. And he should study to acquire that skill which comes only through much and often bitter experience: how to encourage the junior to liberty, yet restrain him from licence.

As for what may happen in the field of secondary education—well, that is anybody's guess as yet. But already there is a widespread breakaway from the concept of the secondary school as a place of

formal instruction in neatly organised and more or less completely segregated "subjects". Except in the grammar school—where it is quite possibly right to use the organisation of knowledge in subjects—the subject pattern is breaking down as certainly at the secondary stage as it is at the primary.

As might be expected, this is most evident in the Modern Secondary School.¹ Free from the pressure of external examinations, and compelled to reject a concentrated diet of wholly bookish studies because so many of its pupils are clearly incapable of digesting it, the Secondary Modern School is striking out in various directions along more practical lines. No one could pretend that it has yet got very far on the way to either a coherent theory or an integrated practice. Many of the most progressive schools are still hovering uneasily between the claims of "a good general education", as the Ministry persists in calling it, which, so far as I can understand it, seems to mean education for culture's sake, and the claims of a vocationally biased curriculum, or what might be described as education for employment's sake.

But however undecided the Modern School may be as yet about its ultimate purpose, and consequently about the content of the education it will give, it is quite certain about one thing: that it intends to find the way of salvation for its pupils through practical activities and experiences, and not primarily through academic studies. (This does

¹ My use of this term does not imply acceptance of the current tripartite organisation of secondary education.

not mean, I hasten to add, that books are either neglected or under-valued. There is, admittedly, a tendency in that direction in some of the schools, but in others I have seen more books better used and more highly valued than in many grammar schools.)

This determination to discover ways of learning suited to the unacademic child is leading the Modern Schools to forms of organisation and methods widely different from those of the traditional classroom. For example, five years ago I visited a senior elementary (now a modern secondary) school whose entire curriculum was based on the school garden and poultry-farm. Poultry must have regular daily care, and such care can be learned—so the headmaster believed—only by continuous practice over a period of some duration. So the school was organised in such a way that pupils on “poultry duty” attended no formal classes (other than the school morning assembly) for a fortnight at a time. Working in pairs, they measured and mixed the poultry feed, fed the birds, collected, sorted, recorded, and marketed the eggs, assessed the laying capacity of the hens, cleaned the poultry-houses, did necessary repairs and, at the appropriate seasons, set broody hens, filled and looked after incubators, and brought up the young chicks. Similarly, other pupils spent whole days or more at a time on the school garden.

At first glance this looks like a return to the “School of Industry”, of the early nineteenth century. But it was far from that. The pupils not only cared for poultry and cultivated the garden;

they also studied scientifically poultry-keeping and horticulture. But their studies derived from their activities; and I must say that the standard of their scholarship was as good as the craftsmanship of their activities—which is saying a lot.

I know another Modern Secondary School whose curricula are based, for the boys on the school workshop, for the girls on the housecraft rooms. This school has most beautiful flower gardens, designed, planted, and tended by staff and pupils. These gardens derived naturally from the ideals of fine craftsmanship learned in the workshop and the domestic-science rooms. Boys who were making exquisite wrought-iron gates saw of their own accord what nonsense it was to enclose with such masterpieces of the metal-worker's art ill-kempt and ugly grounds. Girls who were coming to appreciate good furniture, good wallpapers, good curtains, good cutlery, and glass felt instinctively that a room was not complete until embellished with beautiful flowers. Hence the gardens.

A thought I would leave in passing is that however spontaneously these desires for beauty and excellence may arise among pupils, it is the wisdom and forethought of the staff which make it possible for them to emerge. A vital—perhaps *the* vital—part of the teacher's task is to create in the school an environment and atmosphere which encourage the impulse to desire the beautiful and the excellent, and to discourage the impulse to be satisfied with the mediocre, the ugly, and the squalid.

Other Modern Schools I know make music, or art, or social survey their basic activity, and learn their English, history, geography, mathematics, and science as by-products of its pursuit. The Technical Secondary School weaves its studies from the fabric of a trade or industry, or group of trades or industries. Whether this approach to the general from the particular is sound for the secondary stage; whether it is a logical and natural sequence from the generalised studies and activities of the primary school; whether or not it should be applied to all forms of learning at the secondary stage—these are questions to which I do not pretend to know the answers any more than I know to what extent secondary school curricula of to-day are being based on social and educational assumptions which are no longer valid, and are reflecting values that ought to be discarded. But they are questions with which the teacher of to-morrow will be compelled to grapple.

That is why I am devoting one of the longest chapters in this book to the training of the teacher. It is clear to me that since revolutionary changes are taking place in the purpose, content, organisation, and methods of education, equally revolutionary changes must take place in the training of teachers. I have said something already about recruitment; but obviously it would be the sheerest folly and waste to recruit well and then train badly.

CHAPTER III

THE TRAINING

BEFORE attempting to discuss the training of teachers it is necessary, I am sure, to draw a clear distinction between the young recruit and the not so young. Until recently, of course, this question hardly arose, for practically all teachers-to-be entered training college or university at about the age of eighteen. But now older people are also being recruited—a practice I trust fervently will become permanent; and, as the Emergency Colleges quickly discovered, there is all the difference in the world between handling adolescents straight from school and adults who, even though in years they may not be much older, have the sobering experiences of a World War behind them. This is, of course, an exceptional situation, but if we continue to recruit older men and women to teaching, the same principle will obtain; it will be necessary to distinguish sharply between the recruit who has, and the one who has not, had previous experience of independent adult life.

Which raises a preliminary question I feel to be of great and growing importance: at what age ought a man or woman to be allowed to begin to teach? Or

rather—for, within reason, it is not really a question of age—what measure of experience ought they to have had and at what state of maturity ought they to have arrived before they are to be considered fit to take charge of the education of children? Again, until recent times this question did not arise. So long as teaching was merely a matter of doling out knowledge, clearly all that was necessary for a young man or woman was to acquire a sufficiency of the right sort of knowledge, with, perhaps (since children are ticklish creatures to handle, especially in the mass), a few tricks of the trade before being thrown, like Daniels, into the dens of lions' cubs. But now that the emphasis in education is passing from knowledge to experience, now that teachers are increasingly being expected to be, not fact-grinders nor examination crammers, but creators, leaders, and exemplars of model societies in which children may learn the art of living, experience and maturity in the teacher are becoming essential. How can any but the mature nurture the immature into maturity?

For this reason I hold strongly that no man, and very few women, should be permitted to be in charge of the education of children before having proved their capacity to live an independent responsible life in adult society. I would not regard a period of less than three years as sufficient (ordinarily that is; there would be exceptions) to prove such capacity. Consequently, I would admit no man, and only the occasional woman, as candidates for training as teachers before about the age of twenty-four.

This presents all sorts of difficulties, I know, but I regard teaching as so responsible, and so crucially important, a job that no one should be even allowed to think himself fit for it who has not had thorough and successful experience of adult life. I regard the present system of taking raw boys and girls (for that's all they are) straight from school into training college, and returning them straight from college back into school as utterly pernicious: bad for the teacher and worse for the child. Education, we are always being told, is preparation for life; how can those prepare others for life who have never themselves experienced it save in sheltered form under control and direction?

I believe this insistence upon maturity will be completely vindicated by the success as teachers of the men and women trained under the Emergency scheme. All these are older by some years than the normal training-college student. (Their ages range from twenty-two to late in the forties; in one college I know the average age is twenty-nine, in another thirty-five.) All have had an intensive if not extensive experience (some have had both) of life in adult society. Admittedly, for many this has been an abnormal experience; but when you boil down "experience of life" to its essence, which is human relationships, the abnormal is much the same as the normal, only more so. And provided a person has good stuff in him, nothing will mature it so quickly or so fully as war.

What every Emergency College tutor and every

intelligent visitor to the colleges (there have been some of the other sort !) has at once remarked is the responsible and critical attitude these students bring to the problems of education. It is, indeed, hardly possible not to notice it ; it stands out a mile. They appreciate fully the gravity, and the complexity, of these problems, and consequently the serious open-mindedness with which they should be approached. Though they respect their tutors, their power of critical awareness is so developed that they are prepared to take on trust from them nothing save such facts and figures as cannot be disputed or questioned. Nor do they take for granted anything they see done in the schools. (I have, indeed, been told of one instance where an emergency student on teaching practice was so appalled at the methods of the teacher whom he was "observing" that he asked to be allowed to take the class, and at the end was thanked by the teacher for having shown him how to teach !) These students will not accept any theory, any method, until they are completely convinced that it is justified. And they take some convincing !

Let me meet right away one objection almost invariably made whenever I air my theory that teachers should have *lived* before being allowed to teach. I really am not so foolish as to imagine that merely going through the motions of living—you know, getting out of bed at the last moment, scrambling through breakfast yet missing the bus, dawdling through the working day with one eye on the clock and the other on the boss, and then finishing up each

night at the 'flicks or a dance-hall—constitutes irresponsible life in adult society. But it is surprising how many people seem to think I have something like that in mind.

A more serious objection is that if a man or woman were hoping to become a teacher in the late twenties it would hardly be possible to take up a skilled occupation before, and that repetitive, mechanical, or other unskilled employment does not offer the quality of experience required by a teacher. In parenthesis, may I suggest that few people who by nature are fitted only to become unskilled or semi-skilled labourers are likely to apply to be taken on as teachers; and fewer still to be accepted. Then let me say outright that if a boy or girl has it in mind to become a teacher, some experience of working alongside unskilled or semi-skilled labourers would be invaluable. It should not last too long, for in time such work and contacts tend to dull and coarsen the mind, but a short experience would be beyond price.

Ideally, the would-be teacher should engage in two or three occupations each giving a different experience of people and things. What a wonderful background a young teacher would have who had spent, for example, twelve months in a coal-mine, twelve months in a retail shop, and twelve months as a junior clerk in a solicitor's office! Always provided he had kept his eyes and ears open and his mind both receptive and critical. For it is not so much the work you do as the people you have to do with. It is the children of these people the teacher

will have to teach, and nothing helps more than first-hand insight into their way of life.

But I confess I have little hope that either public or professional opinion will be induced in the near future to agree that no one should be allowed to become a teacher until he has spent some years in other spheres of life. Apart from the more practical considerations, it would imply too great a dislocation of conventional and inert ideas. I am compelled, therefore, to discuss the training of teachers in terms of students of eighteen, nineteen, and twenty, as well as students of more mature age and experience.

I am somewhat solaced by the fact that national service will claim all men at eighteen—though of course I deplore the necessity of its having to be military service only. I have always advocated a period of national service at about this age as a fitting culmination to secondary education; and I hope that the present obligation will be used to defer the entry of all men into training for teaching until at least the age of nineteen. How valuable this period of service will be will depend partly upon the amount of time the Forces' educational services can induce the training authorities to grant them—and still more upon how they use that time. Their job, as they are well aware, is to maintain interest in the things of the mind and spirit, and to preserve the habit of disciplined study; and from what I know of them they will do their best. But even if they can do little, twelve months of knocking up against all sorts and kinds of men should be an experience of no little

value to any young fellow who has the wit to use it. And if he hasn't, he is not wanted as a teacher.

I am yet more solaced by the fact that, owing to the recommendation of the McNair Committee, the success of the Emergency Training scheme, and the sheer necessity (not to speak of the common sense) of it, there is every likelihood that older candidates will continue to be accepted for teaching in relatively large numbers. I do not see how we can be so foolish as to ignore the lesson of the Emergency scheme, and so I trust that from now on at least a large minority of the recruits to teaching will be men and women who have had successful careers in other occupations and experience in other spheres of life.

Assuming, then, two main categories of recruits, the first point I would make is that both the nature and the length of their preparation for teaching should be different. The adolescent student obviously needs a long course, and of necessity this must be largely a didactic and demonstrative course. If boys and girls of eighteen and nineteen are to be taken on as potential teachers, they clearly must be told a lot of things and they must be shown a lot of things; and, above all, they must be given abundant time, and opportunity, to assimilate and digest what they are told and shown: in other words, to mature. For all such young people I would have at least a four-year course; it would be better if it could be five, or in some cases even six, years.

The machinery for courses of such length is already in existence. Those students who enter teaching by

way of a University Training Department do what is called a four-year course. The term is not strictly accurate, for in fact these students do two separate courses, a three-year course followed by a one-year course. The first three years are devoted to studies leading to a university degree, and whatever the value of the degree as a professional qualification, these years should be regarded as devoted primarily to personal education. (Unhappily, this is all too rarely the case.) The fourth year is devoted to professional training, and is, I believe, generally looked upon by the students as only remotely connected with the degree studies. It is also, I am assured, often hardly taken with the seriousness it deserves; but that is by the way.

Whatever defects may mar the present working of the system, I believe the U.T.D. pattern of personal education followed by professional training to be the right one for young students. I believe that young people who hope to become teachers should be required to devote themselves first, for a period of not less than three years, to a course of personal education and development of a general nature suitable as a foundation for any career. This course should certainly *not* take place in a teacher's training college, but in an educational establishment where there are also students intending to take up other occupations, and some, I hope, who have not yet made up their minds what occupation they will embrace (why must young people be rushed so early into commitment to a career?).

This establishment, if not a fully-fledged college of a university, should certainly be under the aegis of a university and subject to university standards. I need hardly add that the course should be a residential one, and that the buildings should combine grace, dignity, and reasonable comfort. I recently asked a boys' Sixth Form which they would prefer: collegiate residence, hostel residence, or daytime attendance at a university. They were unanimous and unhesitating in choice of the first.

What should the curriculum be for this period of personal education? There should, of course, be no one set curriculum. In the case of those students who opt to take a university degree, their studies will be dictated by the School they enter. But here I would enter a plea for a reform which has been much discussed in recent years and has in part been adopted by a number of universities: the establishment of a general degree which can be taken at either honours or pass level, and the making of the first two years of any degree course much more a period of general education than is the case at present.

At the same time I would like to see instituted comparable courses of the same length and no less rigorous standards but of more practical (as opposed to academic) nature, for the benefit of students of good ability but not suited to the intellectual disciplines of the degree course. These would lead, not to a university degree, but to a qualification which would be regarded professionally as the equivalent of a degree. They would not be for intending

teachers only, but generally for students of practical rather than academic turn of mind.

Both graduating and non-graduating courses should, in my opinion, require during the first year the study of four subjects, which might during the second year be reduced to three, and in the third year to two. For students hoping to become teachers I should almost feel inclined to make study of English (language, literature, and history), Science (natural and social), and the Arts in Western civilisation compulsory during at least the first year. But as I would wish lots of these young students not to be at all certain that they were going to be teachers, I can't go the whole way and say these subjects must be compulsory! In any case, for some students they might not be quite the right combination. But whatever the combination, it should at least touch each of what have been called "the three inevitable areas of man's life and knowledge", "the physical world, man's corporate life, his inner visions and standards".¹

While the same general pattern of studies—four, three, and then two subjects—should be required of both students taking a degree, and those not doing so, the approach to the subjects should be markedly different. I don't want to exaggerate the difference, because there would be many elements common to both graduating and non-graduating courses; but

¹ *General Education in a Free Society*. Report of the Harvard Committee. Editor: Paul H. Buck. Harvard University Press, 1945, p. 98.

I do want to make it absolutely clear that the last thing I have in mind is that the non-graduating courses should be pale reflexions, inferior copies at a lower academic level, of the graduating. They must be courses which are fully as *good*. Their demands must be as exacting and their standards as rigorous: but the demands would not be primarily intellectual demands and the standards not the standards of academic scholarship.

The demands and the standards of the non-graduating courses would be those of the finest craftsmanship, of the skilled job done to the highest degree of excellence. The courses would, in fact, bear much the same relation to the graduating courses as the curriculum of the Modern Secondary School does to that of the Grammar School. In English, for example, there would be more practice in speaking and writing the language, making verse, acting plays, more learning of history and contemporary affairs through visits to places of interest and study of topics built up by way of projects.

In suggesting these non-graduating courses, I am taking it for granted that the universities will not decide to increase the number of their Faculties and Schools to take in subjects and courses which can best be mastered by way of the craftsman's approach to learning. I think this most unlikely to happen, and I am not sure that it should; though I confess I have had my moments of doubt; the line between "liberal" and "illiberal" studies (I don't altogether accept the implication of the second term) is hard to

draw. But I believe that the university, as such, whatever other studies and activities it may take under its wing, should remain itself *par excellence* the place of intellectual discipline achieved through the medium of academic studies. Which raises the intriguing question (not to be pursued here) of whether we are not all wrong in seeking to increase the size and number of our universities and the number of university students, whether it would not be the wiser policy to reduce the number of the universities and to concentrate rather on creating institutions which, like the University Schools of Education, would be affiliated to the universities, under their ægis, and sharing their privileges, rights, and amenities, institutions in which the craftsman's approach to learning rather than the academic scholar's could be cultivated.

Assuming that the distinction between the graduate and the non-graduate will be preserved, I am concerned to establish that the non-graduate's diploma—shall we call it?—taken on the conclusion of a course as long and as exacting as that of the graduate, shall be regarded for the purpose of professional qualification as a teacher as the equivalent of the graduate's degree. In other words, that there shall be no question of one stream of better-educated and another of less well-educated teachers entering the profession.

At present the graduate can legitimately claim to be better educated than the certificated teacher, because the latter learns at his training college much

the same sort of stuff in much the same way but at a distinctly lower academic level. This folly (it is no less) of differential levels of education for teachers must stop; all teachers must be equally well educated up to a high level. But they must be *variously* educated, according to their aptitudes and interests. Unless this is done the Education Act, 1944, can never be put properly into operation; unless teachers are educated in a wide variety of different ways, after school as well as at school, it will never be possible to secure (as the Act requires) that the schools shall "afford for all pupils opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities, and aptitudes".

But this variety of education for teachers must not, I repeat, include the variety of superior and inferior. All teachers should be educated up to a standard comparable with that of a first or second class honours degree. Unless this is done it will not be possible to raise the standards in all the country's schools to the level of those obtaining in the best schools to-day. And unless this is done, England will not have an educational system worthy of her children. The establishment of standards for non-graduating courses should be a first task of the newly-constituted University Schools of Education.

For older recruits to teaching, who have spent some—it may be many—years in other occupations, I do not believe any single length or kind of course can be laid down. This is very awkward admini-

stratively, but it is one of those awkward facts which I am sure must be faced. However, it may not be so bad as at first sight it looks, for there are one or two modifying factors which may mitigate its awkwardness.

The total length of the course, for example, including professional training and whatever personal education may be required, should hardly, save in exceptional cases, be less than six months (two terms), and probably not more than eighteen (five terms). It is justifiable, I think, to deduce these limits from the experience of the Emergency Training Colleges, though I am bound to admit that the evidence is not entirely conclusive. Probably there has been accepted for emergency training a higher proportion of people who are less well-educated and who have a slighter foundation on which to build professional competence than will normally be the case when it has become the regular practice to accept older recruits.

I can well imagine a steady stream of highly educated men and women in the late twenties, the thirties, and the forties being attracted to teaching by their experience in voluntary youth organisations, industrial education schemes, or many types of social service; and not least by experience in bringing up a family. Some of these might well have a sufficiently high level of personal education, and might need but a relatively brief initiation into the technique of teaching. But most, I fancy, would require a course of some length, if only to sort out and

systematise the impressions of the life they have hitherto led.

It is so important that all would-be teachers should have ample time during their preparation for teaching to reflect, to discuss and compare experiences, to draw (and reject) conclusions, and so to build or confirm and strengthen their philosophy of life and of education. And it will be most important of all for these older students, upon whom the profession should be able to rely heavily for the virtues of maturity—experience, balanced judgment, wisdom in action, and breadth, depth, and height of vision.

While I feel it highly desirable that these older students should take their training in the same colleges as the younger ones (each group will have so much to give to the other), I would put in a special plea that they be given separate, and adequate, living quarters. Many of them will be married, and it is quite unreasonable to segregate a man or a woman from family life for a period of weeks or months at a time just because he or she desires to be trained for a new occupation. Lodgings do not meet the case; even if comfortable, they can never be quite "a room of one's own", and they put all sorts of obstacles in the way of meeting in common rooms (where so much education is done) and regular attendance at college societies and clubs. No; there should be an older students' "wing", which should include rooms for both married and unmarried students. There is no getting away from the fact



that nineteen and twenty-nine (and still more nineteen and thirty-nine) do not want to be perpetually in each other's company; nor is it good for either that they should be.

The ground plan of the curriculum of personal education for the older student should be the same as that for the younger. But in the case of the older student much more flexibility of approach should be allowed and much more latitude in allocation of time to one subject or another.

In the first place, I think any older student who so desires, and can pass a fairly stiff qualifying examination, should be allowed to take a shortened degree course. Again, this presents administrative difficulties, but again, I think these should be overcome.

Second, while I think few students should be permitted to study fewer than four subjects, and in general should be encouraged to take up the three I mentioned previously, or at least to cover the three "areas", some students should certainly be allowed to give only a little time to one or more and to concentrate their attention very largely upon the others. If, for example—as is likely to be not uncommon—a student arrived with a considerable and scholarly knowledge of English literature, and speaking and writing the English language well, it would be probably wasteful to require him to devote one-quarter of his time to English, especially if—as also might be quite likely—he knew next to nothing of science, either natural or social. Similarly, a student with, say, ten years' experience as a probation officer would

hardly require a full course in social science, but might well need to devote much more than one-quarter of his time to study of the arts.

I am sorry to labour these obvious truisms, but, strange as it may seem, they often do get overlooked, especially, I fear, for the sake of administrative tidiness and convenience. Education has suffered more than a little from the administrative passion for neatness and uniformity.

The third point I would make is that the principle of mutual instruction should be formally recognised, and incorporated into the scheme of training for the older student. By this I do not mean discussion, or seminar work, but actual instruction by students of students. All these older students will come to college with first-hand knowledge and experience of some particular field of learning or skill, or aspect of life in society. As has been found out again and again in the Emergency Training Colleges, such knowledge may be more profound and detailed, though perhaps not so well ordered, as that possessed by the tutor in charge of the subject concerned. If it were taken for granted that each student was an expert in his own particular field, and that his knowledge would be laid under contribution for the benefit of his fellows, the benefit to the group would be great, and each student would get first-rate practice in straight teaching.

I approach the subject of discussion with much trepidation because, as more than one cynic has observed, adult education by discussion has become

the "new idolatry". Greatly exaggerated claims have been made for it, or rather, for what passes under the name of discussion. Much of this, of course, is not discussion at all, but merely the hap-hazard interjection of heterogeneous (and often half-baked) opinions, enlivened or otherwise at intervals by verbal civil war between particularly opinionated antagonists. This type of "discussion" is not altogether sheer waste of time, but it should be restricted to the lighter moments of the course. On the other hand, I would like to see genuine discussion, that is, the serious search for truth by way of the orderly presentation, analysis, and synthesis of individual points of view, made one of the regular disciplines in the courses for older students. I doubt whether great use of it can be made with the younger people, because of the natural tendency for their opinions to have breadth rather than depth. For them, guided discussion (which is quite another matter) is rather the appropriate technique—though, of course, they must never be deprived of those wonderful sessions extending far into the night and the early morning when they set the whole world to rights without so much as a shudder at the practical difficulties that have prevented their fathers and fore-fathers from achieving Utopia !

I have suggested English, science, and the arts in Western civilisation as perhaps the best combination for all teachers in training, young or old, graduate or non-graduate, because these constitute a thoroughly sound foundation on which to build a balanced and

rounded personal education.¹ They are also the best bases from which to attack the educational objectives which I suggested in Chapter II are increasingly engaging the attention of the teacher: bodily and mental health, communication, mastery of material, and æsthetic appreciation. With these studies forming a major part of the course of personal education, much of what is to-day included in the theoretical part of the professional training could be cut out.

By the end of the course of personal education the teacher in training might be expected, for example, to have a good working knowledge of the structure of the English educational system and first-hand knowledge of many schools, together with similar knowledge of other public and voluntary social services. I would like to emphasise that this knowledge should be broad, and evenly distributed, with no specialising on the educational and ignoring of the other services because the student is going to be a teacher. These general education courses, whether for graduates or non-graduates, must in no circumstances become labelled "For teachers only"; they must be equally open, in fact as well as in theory, to students thinking of other professions or of industrial or commercial careers.

This would probably be readily agreed in the case of the degree courses; what I want equally readily

¹ In accordance with what I wrote in Chapter II, I leave out of consideration the question of religious education, though fully conscious that many people would not consider any education either balanced or rounded without it.

agreed is that the non-degree course should be regarded as first-rate education for people going into no matter what kind of occupation. One way of helping towards this would be to regard no student as committed to teaching before he signs on the dotted line for the period of professional training which would follow the course of personal education. Up to that moment he should feel perfectly free to decide upon any other career he liked. A further reason for desiring that the course of general education should be regarded as valuable for all is that no man or woman should ever be considered to have committed himself or herself to teaching for life. It would do education no end of good if most teachers gave up teaching and went into another occupation at or before the age of forty-five.

The curriculum for the period of professional training should, in my opinion, be strictly confined to professional matters. I do not mean, of course, that the arts and sciences and graces of life should be locked up and put into cold storage during this time. On the contrary, I believe that the student should be enabled to live a rich, full, and varied social and cultural life. But the working day—which should be a decently short one, for the sake of efficiency and freshness—should be wholly and uninterruptedly devoted to the theory and practice of education. We want trained, not half-trained, teachers.

Within a year, or even rather more, it is not possible for young students to delve very deeply into the theory of education, which in any case is without

a solid background of practice a relatively unprofitable study for the immature. The greater part of the time should be given to field work—that is, to observing and practising in schools. Here, again, depth is hardly possible, but breadth of experience should be insisted upon. During the first two-thirds of the course students should observe, and teach children of all ages in primary and secondary schools. This I regard as absolutely essential.

The necessity for this breadth was brought home to me very forcefully in my last two teaching posts. In the first of these I was in charge of the preparatory department of a secondary school. I had occasionally taught children below the age of eleven before, but never for more than a lesson or two at a time. Now I was faced with three classes containing upwards of 100 children whose ages ranged from seven to twelve. Within a week I was compelled to realise that here was a mental climate utterly different from any I had known in a succession of secondary schools; that the interest and learning patterns were most markedly different and that very different techniques and methods were accordingly required.

As time went on I grew to know the lines of development through the junior stage and began to see how in the last year they linked up with those of children in the first year of the secondary school. But how much better, how much more understanding my work would have been, how many errors I might have avoided, and how much less my "impatients" need have suffered, had I known

something of this before! The argument, incidentally, is valid not only perpendicularly, but horizontally, as teachers will discover when those transfers at thirteen begin to take place from Modern to Grammar, Grammar to Technical, Grammar or Technical to Modern School. Queer fish the transferred will seem (and they will suffer accordingly) except to teachers who understand the strange ways in which they learn in other types of school.

My last teaching job was as headmaster of a newly established secondary school for "practically minded" boys set up by a progressive L.E.A. In my innocence I thought it only sensible (as well as courteous) to call upon the heads of the junior schools which might be expected to send pupils to my school. In one of the first schools I visited the head received me with barely concealed suspicion. "What do you want here?" he asked. I explained that as mine was a new type of school, and that as no one (myself included) was as yet very sure just what kinds of boys would be best suited in it, I thought it would be a good idea—and I hoped he would, too—if we worked pretty closely together. I added that though I had a somewhat special reason for coming, I would have done so even had I been the head of an ordinary secondary school, because I thought that as a general principle the heads of primary and secondary schools ought to know each other well. He looked at me thoughtfully for a long time. Then he said slowly, "I have been teaching

for twenty-five years, and you are the first secondary school teacher I have ever seen in an elementary school."

I won't dwell on the social implications of such a state of affairs. But how wrong *educationally* it is! How can teachers expect to be able to treat their pupils as "whole personalities" (as latterly we are so fond of boasting that we do) if they know nothing about them or how they are educated except during the particular age-range of the school they are in? What mockery it makes, too, of our constant assertion that education is a continuous process. Every teacher in a secondary school ought to feel completely at home in a primary school; and vice versa.

Such cross-fertilisation ought to be begun during training. During the last third of a student's professional course by all means let him concentrate on the age-range (and the subject if he is going to be a subject teacher) which most naturally appeals to him, but during the previous two-thirds let his practical experience be as wide as possible. I would like to see the teacher who intends to work with infants compelled to take a series of lessons with the Sixth Form in a secondary school; I would still more like to see the intending Sixth-Form specialist compelled to spend a week of mornings in charge of a really lusty class of infants—with, I hasten to add, a thoroughly experienced infant teacher hovering in the background, to prevent the possibility of battle, murder, or sudden death!

As regards the division of time between theory and practice during the professional training, I feel again that a clear distinction ought to be drawn between the adolescent student and the adult. The former will have to *learn* his theory, and so must be taught it. He has no background of experience to which to relate it. (Memories of schooldays are not really very valuable.) The mature student, on the other hand, cannot fail to bring to his study of educational theory some relevant first-hand experience, however little he may realise this when he begins, and however remote from education his experience may seem to have been. He should therefore be not so much taught theory as invited to examine it critically in the light of his own experience and that of his fellow-students.

Which leads me to the not really paradoxical conclusion that the mature student ought to give a far greater proportion of his time to the theory, and the philosophy, of education than should the immature. For these older students, if they are to be properly used as teachers, should have a very different kind of contribution to make to education from that of the younger. Youth should bring great energy and many ideas, most of them in their crude original state impracticable; the older teacher newly come into teaching should bring to bear upon its problems an objective and uninhibited eye, but withal a judgment which can discern and reject the impracticable, yet seize upon and develop the germ of genius that is to be found in many an impracticable idea.

So far I have discussed only the initial preparation of the teacher, the education and training he should undergo before he can be regarded as fit to enter the teaching profession. But beyond question a teacher should go on being educated and trained systematically throughout his teaching career. I say deliberately "being educated and trained", to distinguish this process from the continuous self-education and self-training which every personally and professionally self-respecting teacher imposes upon himself. He will never make a first-rate teacher who does not, at the end of each day ask himself: Where did I go wrong to-day? and, What might I have done better? And he will have to be a mighty good teacher (or a mighty bad one) if he cannot recall a dozen shortcomings, lapses, and downright flagrant errors.

The preparation given to a student before he enters the teaching profession should be regarded as a preparatory training only. It should be succeeded as a matter of course by further regular, formal, and compulsory periods of training, each of considerable duration. Voluntary "refresher" courses and "summer schools" of a week or so are all very well in their way (or at least some of them are), but their value is mainly inspirational. And as everyone knows they chiefly attract the teachers who need them least.

Why the principle of periodic training courses for teachers in service, so widely advocated and applauded, has never been generally adopted in prac-

tise, I do not know—or rather, I do. It is because, despite the lip-service paid to the importance of the teacher's task, the job isn't really regarded as all that important. And the saddest part of the story is that, though teachers themselves are loudest of all in their assertion of its importance, they haven't really made it all that important.

I want to see the job given the importance that is its due. Which means that I want to see it *made* as important as it ought to be. So now I'm going to discuss the question of incentives. For even teachers are human, and will work better with spurs to endeavour—even base material spurs—than when there are none, or only inadequate ones. And because the material incentives never have been good enough, and are not good enough yet, teaching has never attracted anything like all the ability it ought nor got anything like the best out of those in the profession. And, largely for the same reason, there is to-day a regrettable flight from a profession the ablest ought to be fighting to enter.

CHAPTER IV

THE HIERARCHY

UNTIL a short while ago I thought that this would be the most controversial chapter in a somewhat controversial book. In it I advocate a principle which is strongly opposed by many teachers and some of their professional associations. But after I had drafted the chapter I was rung up by the secretary of a leading teachers' organisation, and to my delight (and I confess my surprise) I found that he and his organisation were coming round to the point of view here presented. One swallow doesn't make a summer; still, it does make me more hopeful than I was that yet another of the ideas which, when I have first advocated them, have been dubbed Utopian or impracticable, or just daft, will be received into the sun of professional favour—having been discovered to be neither Utopian nor impracticable, nor daft, but on the whole rather sensible, certainly practicable—and a matter of some urgency!

Incidentally, lest the last sentence seem to be intolerably conceited, may I repeat in print what I have so often maintained in private conversation and on public platforms: that none of the educational reforms I have advocated ever since I began to thrust

my ideas upon other people is either original to me or even new? I used to think some of them were, but I can to-day confidently assert that every single reform I have ever suggested has been suggested previously by someone else, and that almost every one has actually been tried out in practice, though possibly only in embryonic form, by some teacher or administrator in this country. If I have given some of these ideas a more modern twist, or developed them a little more fully, that is all. In any case, what does it matter who originates good ideas? All that matters is that they are taken up.

That applies to the idea present in this chapter: that the teaching profession should be organised as a hierarchy based on professional merit.

Of course, there is already a hierarchy in teaching. There always has been. Once upon a time in the public elementary school there was a quite imposing hierarchy. It ran: candidate for pupil teachership; pupil teacher; supplementary teacher; provisionally certificated teacher; assistant certificated teacher; and principal certificated teacher. I hasten to assure readers that I am not advocating the return of that hierarchy! To-day there are class teachers, subject specialists, teachers holding posts of special responsibility (which many teachers are clamouring to have abolished); in large schools there are heads of departments, second masters or mistresses, or first assistants, even deputy headmasters and head-mistresses. In all schools there are head-teachers or headmasters/mistresses.

But on what principle is the present hierarchy based? On merit? No doubt promotion often goes by merit, but who would say it always does? Is it not nearer the truth to say that in secondary schools it most frequently goes to ambition, in primary schools to seniority? When a secondary school advertises for a head, do the entries always comprise the cream of those most fitted for the post? Would it not be nearer the truth to say that they are likely to comprise a selection of (a) needy assistants who want more money, (b) ambitious assistants who want more power, (c) social climbers, (d) assistants who are bored with class teaching, and (e) occasionally, teachers who have seriously considered the duties and responsibilities of headship and decided that, so far as they can judge, they will give better service as heads than as assistants? And who would say that (e) always gets the job?

Again, what about merit that doesn't get, that may not even desire, promotion? What about the man or woman whose heart is really in class teaching, or group work, who values the personal daily contacts with boys or girls more than anything else, and wouldn't say thank you for a headship or even a post of special responsibility? Well, there's the Burnham Scale, which may have been improved by the time these words appear in print, but which at present starts him off quite handsomely (few teachers are worth £300 a year during their first year of teaching), only to advance him bit by bit to an altogether inadequate maximum, which he reaches before he is

forty—and then leave him, if not high, at least dry, for another quarter of a century or more.

I will not labour the point; it rankles already too sorely in the minds of many teachers. But I must say that to knock some sense into 'the business' of promotion is only one of my reasons for desiring a hierarchy in teaching which is genuinely based on professional merit. Nor, to be perfectly frank, is it my main reason. Let those who wish it have their fun and games over promotion; I should be the last to wish to see the sport killed entirely. Only, let's have it played according to M.C.C. rules.

My main desire is to improve the quality of the teacher, and particularly of the class teacher, by giving him another incentive to add to enthusiasm and love of the job. Man cannot live by ideals alone, especially in these hard times. The quality of the teaching force can be improved greatly by better selection of teachers, better initial training, and regular periods of further training during service. These reforms should ensure a much higher general level, but they will do little to ensure that outstanding merit will be recognised—or induced fully to extend itself. And, as ever, the progress of education will depend upon the teachers of outstanding merit. It is they who fertilise it with creative ideas, and who are sole and willing to prove those ideas by experiment and research until they can be safely handed on to the rank and file.

I suggest that all teachers should start as equals, whatever the type of training they have had. For

this, among other reasons, I have proposed that all young teachers should have the same length of initial training. Let all start as Qualified Teachers; that is the only fair way, seeing that all are beginners. Let there be the same starting salary for all (and at the risk of putting my head into the lion's mouth I say without hesitation for women as well as for men).

But while all should start equal, it is quite wrong for all to remain equal for more than a short time. After a reasonable period of probation—I suggest two years—it should be open to any teacher, graduate or non-graduate alike, to qualify for a higher professional status, carrying a higher rate of remuneration, by submitting himself to examination and testing by the University School of Education in which he obtained his training. I will call this status that of First-Class Qualified Teacher; and I suggest that it carry a substantially higher rate of pay than that of Qualified Teacher. I suggest further that no promotion be open to anyone who does not possess it.

I suggest that there should be three main ways by which a Qualified Teacher could become a First-Class Qualified Teacher. The first is by taking a higher degree in the Faculty or School in which he graduated, or, alternatively, taking a second degree in another School or Faculty. This should appeal to teachers aiming at taking Sixth Form courses in grammar or technical secondary schools, at becoming heads of specialist departments, or at going on to university teaching or advanced work in more popular adult education.

The second is by taking a university diploma or degree in Education. Bristol University has already made its Diploma in Education a superior qualification to its Certificate, and obtainable only after professional experience. This way should appeal particularly to teachers interested in research and experimental work, to teachers aspiring to posts in training colleges or university training departments, or in educational administration. It should also appeal to the great body of teachers who are interested in just teaching; and it is for them that it should be particularly designed.

The third way should be for those teachers who specialise in subjects for which universities do not award degrees: physical training, handicrafts, gardening, domestic science, and so on. These are the teachers who under my scheme would have taken a non-graduating course during their initial training; and they are the teachers who will be the backbone of the Modern Secondary School, and probably of the junior school as well. They must certainly be enabled to qualify for the status of First-Class Qualified Teacher—and for every other higher rank open to a teacher. Plenty of machinery is already in existence to make this possible: the City and Guilds and the Royal Society of Arts examinations, for example.

The status of First-Class Qualified Teacher should, as I suggested, be required as a qualification for promotion. But something more should be required of a teacher who desires to be promoted; he

should have to prove that he is a fit person for promotion.¹ The present procedure of testimonials, references, and ordeal by interview does not prove this at all. I suggest that there should be formal tests of professional competency to take any post involving supervision and direction of the work of others. I suggest further that promotion should be systematically graded.

The first promotion open to a First-Class Qualified Teacher should be that of holder of a post of special responsibility, to which term I give a somewhat different connotation from that at present accepted. In all schools save the very smallest, that is, in all schools having more than three teachers, a generous proportion of the posts—say one in four—should be posts of special responsibility, this proportion not to include heads of departments, deputy heads, and heads. The particular function attaching to the post of special responsibility would be that of advising and helping teachers who ranked as Qualified Teachers only, especially new recruits, and students in the school for observation and school practice. Holders of posts of special responsibility would also be called into consultation by the head and the heads of departments on matters of policy, and would assist in planning the organisation and curriculum of the school.

Only holders of posts of special responsibility

¹ I use the conventional term "promotion", but this must not be taken to imply that I regard the "class-teacher's" job as least skilled or important. I regard it as the most skilled and the most important.

should be eligible for posts as heads of departments or heads of small schools. Since such posts clearly demand qualities of leadership, and organisational and administrative as well as teaching ability, candidates should be required to submit themselves to a test to prove that they possess the desired qualities; and courses in school organisation and administration should be made available for them.

Many teachers will doubtless hate this idea of promotion tests, but it is particularly in leadership and administration that so many head-teachers fall down. Their administration is not so much inefficient as chaotic. In part this is certainly due to lack of clerical assistance, a defect now happily being remedied by many local authorities—though frequently inadequately—but in part (and I am afraid a large part) it is also due to the complete ignorance of heads of departments and of schools as to how to arrange their own work, how to use their time, how and what to delegate, and how to set about even the most rudimentary bit of planning.

I shall never forget the shock I got when once I called upon the headmaster of a large school and found him engaged upon distributing copies of a school photograph to boys in the school. Our interview—on a matter of some importance—was punctuated throughout an hour and a half by the arrival every five minutes or so of a boy who had been called from his class. The boy's name—generally not known to the head—was first laboriously searched for in a typewritten list—apparently not in either

alphabetical or class order—and when found ticked off by the head, who then handed the boy a photograph and received from him the purchase price, this latter usually involving the counting and giving of change. The name was then ticked a second time, and the boy told whom to summon next—this frequently involving lengthy reference to the school timetable to discover what class the boy wanted next was in, and where the class would be.

I calculated that during the hour and a half I was in the room (and heaven knows how much longer the distribution went on) up to twenty classes were disturbed, the work of some twenty boys was interrupted for five minutes or more, and that of up to 600 boys and staff for lesser periods. The head of a large and complicated organisation had devoted the better part of an afternoon to a job that could have been done with complete efficiency in a quarter of the time by a junior clerk or a senior pupil.

This anecdote is not descriptive of an exceptional occurrence; it could be paralleled any day in the area of any local authority. It will serve to show that I am not altogether unreasonable in demanding that headships of large schools should be open only to heads of departments who have successfully completed a course on the responsibilities and duties of heads of schools. It is for ever being said—and how truly!—that the character and efficiency of a school depend primarily upon its head. What amazes me is that so little *systematic* care is exercised upon the choice of a head.

The three routes by which I suggest teachers could add to their qualifications should not be regarded as mutually exclusive. For teachers aspiring to the "plums" of the education service at least two should be obligatory. The man or woman who desires to be an organiser in the service of a local education authority, for example, should certainly possess both administrative and specialist qualifications as well as proved teaching ability. An inspector, whether in the service of a local authority or in H.M. Inspectorate, should possess all these qualities, together with something that is not examinable but which can certainly be assessed, the capacity for wise and kindly yet critical advice. As for the chief education officer of a local authority, the array of qualities and qualifications he should ideally possess is far too long for so short a book as this!

I would insist that all organisers, inspectors, and administrative officers should have had experience as teachers in schools—genuine experience, of considerable length, not the term or two in selected schools by which so many men have slid into administration—and that they should have worked their way up through the promotion tests to the head-teacher grade. It need not take all that long for a really able man or woman: and none other should be in the top ranks of administration. And just as there should be courses for intending heads, so there should be for administrators and inspectors. The present profusion of unsuitable appointments is sufficient evidence for this contention.

A final, but most important, point. Just as there should be recognised avenues of promotion within the teaching profession and the administrative service of education, so there should also be equally well-recognised avenues out of teaching, and out of the education service altogether. I have a rooted conviction that a great many teachers ought to get out of teaching, or at least out of the schools, when they come to middle age. I mean this in no way disrespectfully; quite the reverse. I believe that great numbers of teachers, perhaps the majority, grow out of tune with the child or the adolescent mind as their own minds grow more mature. And once the teacher's mind is out of tune with the child's, for the sake of both sides the teacher ought to go elsewhere. But at present he can't; or at least most teachers can't. They are stuck.

Provision ought to be made for this contingency by the provision of courses for teachers seeking other occupation—the obverse of the courses for men and women seeking to come into teaching from other occupations. Emphatically, this ought to be a two-way traffic; and if it can be done one way it can be done the other. As it is, many teachers, especially grammar-school teachers, chance their arm and go out into journalism, authorship, radio, cinema, law, or industrial or commercial occupations. My point is that after having given good service in the schools they shouldn't have to risk so much but should be given the chance of a navigated passage.

One switch, not out of teaching but out of the

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schools, should be made particularly easy; from teaching children to teaching adults. This is a matter the education service has in its own hands, and to which it should give most pressing attention. There is going to be an enormous demand for teachers of adults—and if my hunch is correct there are thousands of not too happy schoolteachers who would begin a new life, and be huge successes, as teachers of adults.

CHAPTER V

THE PURPOSE

THIS chapter is addressed in the main to the intelligent layman, the kind of fellow who asks, quite genuinely and not without reason, "But why all this fuss about schoolteachers? I know they've got an important job, and all that, but is it really as important as you make out? Is it really necessary for teachers to be the super persons you say they should be?"

In attempting to answer these perfectly fair questions I am not going to rely upon my own unsupported opinions, which after all are of no more value than the next man's. I am going to call in evidence two or three authorities who should command pretty well universal respect. Then, if I add a word or two of my own, it will at least have to be conceded that I argue in good company.

First, Plato, who according to Sir Richard Livingstone, one of the greatest living students of the Greek philosopher's thought :—

... saw what we ignore, not only that education is the basis of the state, but that the ultimate aim and essence of education is the training of *character*

—to be achieved by the discipline of the body, the will, and the intelligence.¹

May I draw attention to the key phrases of that passage?: that “education is the basis of the state”—a pretty stiff claim—and that its ultimate aim is “the training of character”—not, it will be noted, the accumulation of knowledge, or still less the passing of examinations as a means to a professional, industrial, or commercial career. And may I ask whether any but the ablest men and women should be permitted to undertake a job upon which the safety and success of the state depend; or whether any but the finest characters should be allowed to nurture and shape the characters of the young, who are far and away the nation’s most valuable asset?

But, it may be retorted, Plato has been dead a long time, and anyhow, he lived in an age and in circumstances very different from those of to-day. In a little Greek city-state, which was not much more than a small country town, and more than 2,000 years ago, when life was almost unbelievably simple and uncomplicated, the kind of education Plato had in mind may perhaps have been as important as he said, but it does not necessarily follow that it is equally important in a large, complex, industrialised and urbanised modern democracy.

My own answer would be that obviously it is far more important, because on the one hand there is so much more to learn and on the other it is clearly so

¹ *Some Tasks for Education*. Oxford University Press, 1947, p. 33.

much more difficult for the individual personality to come to ripeness in the stormy weather of complexity than in the sun of simplicity. But to meet this critic's objection, I will come nearer home. Much more recently—in fact only a century ago—Benjamin Disraeli wrote that "Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends," and more recently still, in March 1943, Winston Churchill declared in a broadcast to the nation that "the future of the world is to the highly-educated races, who alone can handle the scientific apparatus necessary for pre-eminence in peace or survival in war". And you will find the pages of books, pamphlets, and periodicals of all sorts simply littered to-day with similar assertions.

It is, of course, open to question whether Plato, Disraeli, and Churchill meant exactly the same thing when they spoke of "education". In fact, it is quite certain they did not. And that is the crucial point. It would be the sturkest lunacy to pretend that what passed for education in the public elementary school of, say, seventy years ago—just mechanical grinding-in of the "Three R's"—could be the basis of any state. It would be no more sensible to suggest that the unintelligent plugging of the elements of Latin which was the sole pabulum at many a grammar school at the same time was any stronger or surer prop. But my contention is that the meaning of education and the conception of the function of the school have completely changed since those days, have expanded and grown enormously in importance.

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What, then, do I mean by education? How, in particular, would I define that general education which it is the peculiar business of the primary and secondary schools to give and which is the foundation upon which (in my opinion and in that of many others) all specialised education must be built? Here is a definition which attracts me. It was written in January 1943 by James Bryant Conant, President of Harvard University, U.S.A., and quoted by him in his introduction to the report of a committee he set up to study "The Objectives of a General Education in a Free Society":¹—

The heart of the problem of a general education is the continuance of the liberal and humane tradition. Neither the mere acquisition of information nor the development of special skills and talents can give the broad basis of understanding which is essential if our civilisation is to be preserved. No one wishes to disparage the importance of being "well informed". But even a good grounding in mathematics and the physical and biological sciences, combined with an ability to read and write several foreign languages, does not provide a sufficient educational background for the citizens of a free nation. For such a program lacks contact with both man's emotional experiences as an individual and his practical experience as a gregarious animal. It includes little of what

¹ *General Education in a Free Society*. Report of the Harvard Committee. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1945, p. viii.

was once known as "the wisdom of the ages", and might nowadays be described as "our cultural pattern". It includes no history, no art, no literature, no philosophy. Unless the educational process includes *at each level of maturity* some continuing contact with those fields in which value judgments are of prime importance, it must fall far short of the ideal.

Now, it may or may not be agreed (there are many to-day who would disagree) that "the heart of the problem of a general education is the continuance of the liberal and humane tradition", but surely no one can dispute the truth of the last sentence in the above quotation: that "unless the educational process includes *at each level of maturity* some continuing contact with those fields in which value judgments are of prime importance, it must fall far short of the ideal". And surely it is of the earliest stages of maturity, where the foundations of value judgment (or in other words, the foundations of character) must be laid, that the task of the teacher in the primary or secondary school is so immensely important—and so prodigiously difficult. And that is why these teachers must be not only the ablest men and women we can lay our hands on but also men and women of fine and tested character.

For it is not only the capacity to discern and respect values which must be cultivated; there are also the quality of the values and our commitment to them to be considered. This is more important

for us in Britain to-day than ever before in our history. There can be little doubt that as a people we are somewhat relaxing our hold upon the high standards of integrity and honesty for which we have been justly honoured. It may be—one fervently hopes it is—merely a temporary recession due to the deprivations, the frustrations, the strains and stresses of two world wars (separated only by an uneasy peace), which have all but exhausted for the time being our spiritual as well as our material resources. But it may be a symptom of something much deeper and more permanent.

Whatever the cause, and however serious the disease, one thing is certain; the nation's primary and secondary schools can proffer one of the surest and safest remedies—provided they are staffed with men and women of integrity, honesty—and ability. If not, they will equally surely assist the downward trend.

This is not a matter which concerns Britain alone. Western civilisation, with all its defects and imperfections the finest civilisation the world has known—and capable of far greater heights than it has yet reached—is in deadly peril. Unless some peoples representative of it can bring about its renaissance, it is assuredly doomed; and every scrap of evidence suggests that something much worse, something on a far lower level, would take its place. And, rightly or wrongly, at least half the civilised world is looking to Britain to lead that renaissance.

I may seem to be wandering far from my theme. It may seem to some to be utterly ridiculous to relate

a spiritual renaissance of Western civilisation to the work of education in the primary and secondary schools of Great Britain. In truth, I am not wandering at all; the connection is intimate. Give me a child until he is twelve, said the Jesuit, and you can do what you like with him afterwards. The individual character and the national character alike are shaped in the home and the school; and nothing that is done thereafter will greatly alter either.

I am the last person to under-estimate the influence of the home. But the standards of the home are individual standards; each home has different standards from the next. The school, being (at long last) a national institution, can set and preserve national standards—at as high a level as the people serving it are capable of sustaining. Moreover, whether we like it or not, the school is taking over more and more of the functions of the home, and not only of the home, but of the small community, the neighbourhood, from which the child of yesterday got so much of his education, but which to-day scarcely exists save in rural areas, and then only as a rule in impoverished form. The trend is not irreversible, as Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford, and others have shown, but it is unlikely to be reversed in our time.

There is, indeed, no other institution capable of bringing to bear so universal and powerful an influence upon the child as the school. The churches, even were they not weak and divided, are to-day primarily institutions for adults; the school is solely and uniquely an institution for children. And the

fact that the school of to-day is accepting these new and onerous responsibilities, and is turning decisively, I believe, and permanently, away from the trivial task of imparting information to the crucially important task of creating dynamic societies in which children may learn progressively the art of living creative and happy lives as members of a free democratic society which compels me to believe that, in days not too far ahead, it will make education in fact, in Britain, the very basis of the state and a main source of the well-being of society. And that, in turn, compels me to demand the very best among our men and women as teachers.

For this revolutionary change in the function and importance of the school is only just beginning. It will perish in the bud unless we see to it that the best in character and ablest in intellect are induced to serve it. If that can be achieved, then, as my friend and "master" (in the good old sense) Sir Richard Livingstone has written,¹ education in school may enable all our boys and girls :—

... to see the vision of excellence, so far as our limitations allow; to get at least a glimpse of the unchanging values of the eternal world as they are revealed in whatever is beautiful and good in the material world of earth; to attempt to make one's infinitesimal contribution towards a society which will embody them more fully than does our own.

That, and no less, must be our aim.

¹ *Some Tasks for Education*, p. 50.

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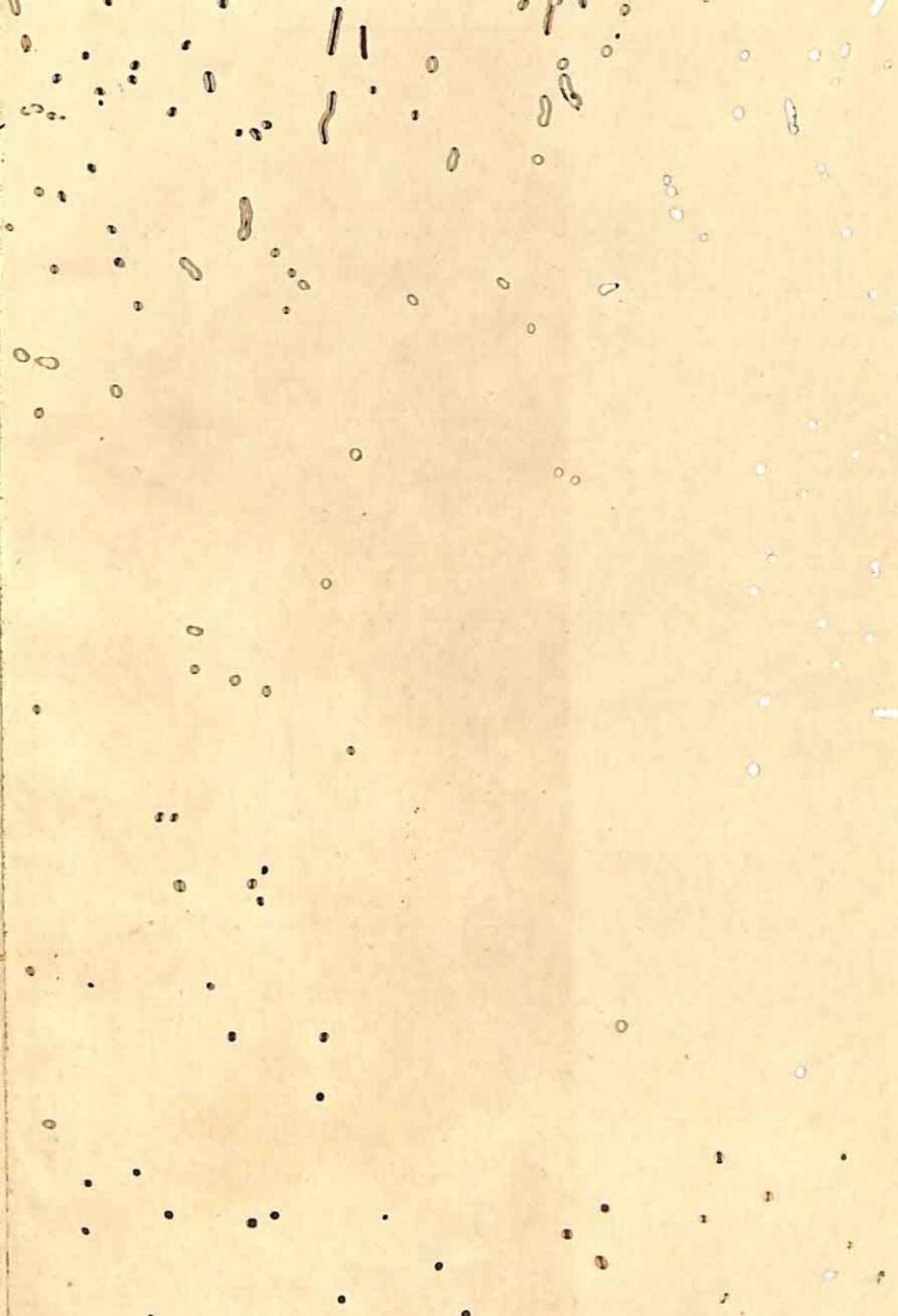
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An Outspoken Book

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